MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

JUNE, 1923

Vol. LXXIX

NUMBER 1

The Butterfly of Leepoohu

A COMPLETE NOVEL—THE STRANGE STORY OF A SOUTH SEA ISLAND THAT DEFIED CIVILIZATION AND WENT BACK TO SAVAGERY

By Eleanor Gates

Author of "The Poor Little Rich Girl," "Apron Strings," etc.

TELL you, Trupp, you're breaking the law!"

Arnold Britto, the other trader on the island of Leepoohu, stood on the graveled path before Trupp's store of plaited bamboo and pandanus thatch, and pointed a slender, well manicured forefinger in passionate accusation.

A laugh—musical and mischievous; then into sight, above the basketry of the railing which surrounded Trupp's vine-shaded veranda, lifted the head of a girl. Her face was almost startlingly beautiful—an exquisite rounded oval in shape, the soft, unblemished skin tinted a clear, delicate cream. Each cheek was touched with pale rose. The full lips, as tender in outline as a child's, were made perfect with a dash of rich, ripe scarlet.

Her lustrous eyes, large and of a velvety black, were dancing roguishly. They were shaded by lashes so long and thick that a seductive shadow lay under them. Her nose was small and straight. Luxuriously framing her features was her dark hair, curly and well kept. Falling unconfined, it swept her shoulders like a cape, and was so alive and glossy that, as she tipped her head coyly at Britto, its waves took on, in the sharp light, tints of bronze and purple, like the feathers of some tropic bird.

"Oh, Arnol', ain' you fonny?" she laughed. The island dialect that she spoke did not seem curious or incongruous, so strangely exotic was her beauty. "You j'alous bout Trupp! You likes for sell all gins!"

Britto was the dandy of the settlement,

a slight-built, wiry, narrow-shouldered man of thirty-five. He affected soft-collared shirts of white Chinese silk, flowing ties, precisely creased trousers of porous crash bound round with a colorful cummerbund, a soft straw hat of the finest native make, socks that matched the cummerbund, and yellow shoes with sharply pointed toes.

The attractiveness of his appearance began and ended with his dress. The muddy swarthiness of his narrow face was not only startlingly emphasized by several long, blanched scars, which testified to a deep slashing with a knife, but the very muscles of a countenance indisputably Latin had been drawn out of place by the healing of

the scars, and left misshapen.

On the left cheek, the healing ran from nose to ear, parallel with the line of the jaw, and had so caught in the skin that the lower lid of his small, dark eye was pulled downward, exposing its angry lining. On the right cheek three vertical cuts, at right angles to the other, drew his nose in their direction, and strained smooth the flesh between them and the ear. To either side of all the scars were the tiny white markings left by stitches. These edged the blanched wounds with a delicate, fernlike tracery.

Now, turning toward the lovely, mocking face which looked down upon him, he managed a smile that made his already dis-

torted face almost grotesque. "Hello, Gata!" he answered.

In every particular Trupp was in violent contrast to his business rival, but most of all physically, being both fair and fat. His soft, yellowish hair covered his massive head in babyish little wisps. His brows and his lashes were so pale and so scant that he appeared to have none at all.

As for his size, he was a very whale of a man, built of shivering spheres mounted on two wabbly columns—his huge legs—which were incased in clean but wrinkled trousers held up by red suspenders. Now, as he lay back on his big cane lounge, his slippered feet off the floor, his hands clasped upon the loud Scotch plaid of the gingham shirt that covered the bulging front of him, he was like some huge blond Buddha.

The look of his yellow-gray eyes, and the point of his panetela cigar, were both aimed straight up at the bamboo rafters of the veranda, to which his smoke rose like incense from a heathen altar.

"Britto," he rumbled around the pane-

tela and over his chin, "remember, when you're talking to me, that I'm not a squaw man. I don't hit the pipe, and I don't gamble away any woman's earnings with the sailors that land on this beach. Also, if I had a wife, no matter what her color was, who did all the hard work around my place, I'm the kind of a man that would have the decency to be faithful to her; so don't you come here cheeking me!"

Once more Gata burst into laughter, throwing back her black head, swaying on the bare knees that were upholstered by Trupp's veranda matting, and lifting into sight the white-faced kitten that she was

teasing.

"O-oh, Arnol'!" she cried. "W'at Eleenay say at you if shees hear thees squaw talk, an' opium smoke, an' gamble, an' love make?"

Lowering his head, taking the cigar from his mouth, and turning toward the girl, Trupp began to shake with laughter—till the cane chair creaked and the very veranda heaved, as if from the undulations of a gentle earthquake.

"That's the idea, kiddy!" he told her.

"You got it! If Eleenay was to know all about our friend here, oh, but wouldn't she

slit up his face again?"

With Gata leaguing herself against him, Britto gave over his silent contemplation of her beauty, and recalled his attention to the business of his visit. Suddenly he

faced square about.

The ribbon of blazing white which was the sand strip bordering the shore of Leepoohu was brilliantly spotted with red and blue and green and yellow and black and white, for the women and children of the island were still loitering about the indiscriminate pile of cases, bundles, and boxes just discharged by a schooner which was now well beyond the barrier reef, showing her dancing stern as she sliced into a head breeze. Toward the lively and colorful scene Britto shook both fists with hysterical vehemence.

"I tell you, you're breaking the law!" he charged again. "Look—that's Dutch gin down there! Two cases of it, plainly marked 'Steve Trupp'! You're getting ready to sell it to the natives. You needn't deny it. You know the stuff 'll take trade away from me, so that I'll go broke. Well, when the commissioner shows up, I'm going to see that you lose your concession. You'll quit business and clear out!"

"You say that selling gin's against the law, do you?" queried Trupp. His tone had in it something that was half amused, yet sinister. "I'm surprised to hear you say that, because I've had the idea, from watching the performances going on of an evening over at your place, that you didn't know it was against the law!"

Britto came about.

"What do you mean?" he spluttered.
"Leetle bits of green bottles," explained

Gata, tantalizingly.

"You'd better belay your gab," Trupp went on quietly. "You'll save a lot of strain on your upper works if you'll just wait till I do sell some of my gin to the natives. All this past year you've been selling gin—brought it in hidden in cases of Manchester cotton—"

"A lie!" Britto answered shrilly; but the dark, knife-wounded face under the flopping hat took on a yellowish tinge.

"In cases of Manchester cotton," Trupp rumbled on; "not open and aboveboard, the way I've brought in a little for myself and my friends. I've got the names of natives that have guzzled your stuff. Of course, the young ones are gone to the plantations on Piupiu; but a couple of the old chaps are right up here in the grove."

Gata's dimpled chin was resting between

the white ears of the kitten.

"O-oh, Arnol'!" she exclaimed. "If Trupp make trouble for you, Eleenay pitch you clean off Leepoohu, so you lan's in ocean, an' gets wet!"

Once more there rippled out the clear, far-carrying notes of her laughter.

Instantly a distant call sounded, in a woman's shrill voice:

" Britt'!"

The trio at Trupp's turned their eyes to look across the sun-baked, sandy stretch between the two stores. On the front veranda of Britto's place was standing a small, wrapper-hung figure.

"Go home, Britto," advised Trupp face-

tiously. "Your boss wants you."

So that the woman in the distance should not overlook her, Gata hastily scrambled to her feet, displaying sloping white shoulders only partly covered, and a slender, rounded body in a badly made but nonetheless becoming calico.

"Shees know I is by Trupp's!" Gata

declared gleefully.

Britto showed the beginnings of serious concern.

"When I came," he protested, "I didn't know you were here."

"Shees know how you runs after me all tam'," continued Gata, roguishly severe; "but I can' halp it 'cause I ver' good for look at."

"I tell you, I thought Trupp was alone!" spluttered Britto, reddening with anger.

"Tell that to the commissioner," put in Trupp, enjoying the other's irritation; "but don't try to tell it to Eleenay. She can't be fooled. She knows how soft you are when it comes to a pretty girl!"

" Britt'!"

"Shees yall again!" cried Gata.

Then, as the discomfited Britto hastily turned homeward, she dashed the kitten unceremoniously at Trupp, dropped herself over the woven railing, and danced to Britto's side. The trader halted, waving a protesting hand before her laughing face.

"Go back, Gata!" he ordered. "For Heaven's sake, haven't you any sense? This is Sunday. Do you want me to be quarreling the rest of the day?"

His expression of disquiet, and the uneasy glance he threw homeward, increased her amusement and her determination to go with him. She put her head on one side.

"Now!" she coaxed. "Le's go over in

your house together!"

Eager to see the fun, Trupp had hauled himself to his feet. He stood, his arms akimbo, his corporosity, round, smooth, and distended, overflowing his leather belt, his breath, with his effort, coming in heavy pah, pah, pah's.

Uncertain, troubled, flurried, Britto was now gazing toward the woman waiting on his veranda, now darting an eye toward the girl. He noted the rumpled cotton.

"It's almost time for church, Gata," he reminded. "You'd better go home and change."

She sidled to him, the velvet-black eyes flirtatiously entreating.

"For long tam' now," she returned, "I don' walk a nice walk with you."

As she bent forward and backward with her mirth, from the veranda behind her sounded Trupp's deep guffaws, like a bass echo.

" Britt'! Bri-i-itt'!"

He dared not delay his going another moment. As he gave a last helpless half turn to right and left, he caught sight of two men, both in white suits and white helmets, who were just starting up from the beach under a wide-spreading umbrella, bright blue in color.

"There's the padre coming now," he told her hastily; "and he's got a stranger with him—say, a swell young chap! Do you want this high-toned guy to see you in that

get-up?"

His words had the desired effect. Her eyes suddenly round with curiosity and eagerness, Gata stared past him toward the nearing umbrella. Then, with a bounce and a sidewise kick of one slippered foot, like the springtime antics of a happy lamb, she was off, taking a path which led across the sandy hillocks of the slope, and through the coconut grove, to the scattered brown shacks of the native settlement, nestling in among the comforting green where the jungle looped down from the hills.

With a nervous gesture Britto continued on homeward, his hat flapping, his arms swinging, his lips framing aloud the explanation which must, his own veranda reached, be instantly forthcoming. Trupp, a big, soft hand stroking the damp yellow curls on the top of his head, went back to his lounge, mingling chuckles with the pah-

pal's of his labored breathing.

H

A FEW minutes later the blue umbreua was bobbing up Trupp's front steps. The trader, in lieu of rising to greet the two men who were under its shade, was managing a complete movement of his gigantic body, and waving a welcoming hand.

"Sail, ho!" he greeted cheerfully. "How are you, Mr. Langdon? Come in out of the sun, both of you, and have a chair!"

The missionary was slightly beyond middle age, and inclined to be stocky in build. At first glance he might have been taken for a prosperous, high-grade business man, or a successful member of the professional class. Many people who have never been in the South Seas think that the typical religious worker there is a slender, flabby, idealistic sort of fellow. John Langdon was a living refutation of this unjust idea. His mouth was firm, but sympathetic. His blue-gray eyes were frank and compelling. His whole countenance was judicial in aspect. With his medicine case in his hand, he looked exactly what he was-physician, counselor, shepherd.

When he spoke, his even voice was precise, and his carefully chosen words, spoken without haste, and combined with a pleasant manner, gave him something that was like an old-time courtliness.

"Mr. Trupp, may I introduce Mr. Warren Phelps?" he asked, folding the blue umbrella.

"How are you? How are you?" cried

the trader heartily.

The younger man was tall and well built. He bared a close-cropped brown head, and made a quick survey of the place with a quiet but appraising eye.

"I'm glad to meet you," he returned, and drew a grass chair forward for the

missionary.

The latter sat. With his pith helmet on his knee, his hair was seen to be graying above a brow that was puckered in undis-

guised concern.

"Mr. Britto was here just now, wasn't he?" he inquired. "I could hear him all the way to the beach. I hope nothing's gone wrong between you two, Mr. Trupp. If there's one thing the only two white men on this island ought not to do, it's to quarrel—especially of a Sunday."

"Well, padre," Trupp returned placidly, "you know how it is with Britto. He don't do anything but dope himself and drink; so he don't get on, and he blames

me for it."

"Then you did have a difference this morning!" the missionary resumed. "I dislike to think of that. As you know, Mr. Trupp, the Leepoohu islanders have never wanted white traders here, and they would like nothing better than to get you and Mr. Britto out—in which case I'm afraid that my work here would be at an end. Do you know what one of the old ladies said to me a week ago, after services? 'Wite men no good for us.' What do you think of that? And she had an ugly light in her old eyes. Mr. Trupp, here's the situation on this island—you and Mr. Britto must stand together. If you're divided, you'll both fall."

"The women are all like that," answered the trader carelessly. "When the men are away working on Piupiu, the women get it into their heads that somehow or other Britto and I are to blame because life is dull. The women don't seem to realize that we aren't the whites that are responsible. Why, we make more money when the men are here, and we miss 'em just as much as the women do—yes, more."

Now the missionary turned toward the stranger.

"Before the traders came," he explained, "there wasn't anything on Leepoohu but savagery. The natives have a strain of Malay in them. Like all mixed bloods, they tend to have the bad qualities of both strains. They're fierce, quarrelsome, hottempered, and, at times, quite intractable."

By a nod that shook his pink and white

cheeks, Trupp agreed to that.

"The men are quite bad enough," he supplemented; "but oh, Christopher, the women!"

Once more the missionary directed his

words to the stranger.

"From the first, the whole island has seethed with resentment against the whites; but particularly touching the matter of restraint—by which you may rightly guess that I am not any too popular. The settlement would like to drink as much gin as it pleased, get in opium, and be worse than careless morally. If the people dared, they'd revert to their old customs, and worship at the overgrown altars up on the mountains behind here, where they used

to sacrifice their enemies."

"We whites hold the lid on, all right," agreed Trupp, with another shake of his cheeks. "There isn't as much civilization here as a man might think. If we ever let go, it 'll be all over but the shouting. Out 'll come the guns that they say are hid up in the gorges, along with the sharks'-teeth swords. They'll dig up their war canoes, too, and go to it. How they hate plantation work! In the old days, fighting was their chief sport, and they want it again. And what could a gunboat do to 'em if they took to the jungle back up yonder, and went on the loose?"

"How long has the white man been in control here, Mr. Langdon?" asked Phelps.

"Barely thirty years. That long ago we three couldn't have sat here on this veranda in safety, unless a gunboat was anchored within gunshot out there. first inroad was made through tradewhich is the usual way of getting in touch with a native settlement. The material things that the white man gives these islanders in exchange for natural products make them tolerate his presence. When an opening has been made through material things, then a man of my calling is permitted to come in, to try to give the poor creatures, along with justice, mercy, and the benefits of good order, some idea of spiritual matters."

At that, Trupp guffawed.

"Glass beads, padre, and gaudy cotton," he observed, "before you can hand 'em the

Bible!"

"Yes," admitted the elder man. "As a preacher on these jungled dots in the Pacific, I'm frank to confess that we must have trade before the word of God. That leads some people to say that missions are commercial. Well, the missionaries who came out into these savage places without commercialism as an introduction generally went into the kettle. Governments will always back a trader with a gunboat. Then along comes the missionary, and he makes the gunboat unnecessary. In the long run, church work is cheaper and more effective than men-of-war."

Young Phelps leaned forward, a half whimsical smile playing about his mouth.

"Judging by some of the samples of my own kind that I've seen down around here," he remarked, "I'd say that your chief problem isn't the native."

Mr. Langdon smiled in return, a trifle

ruefully

"And you'd be right," he answered. "Down here the chief barrier to progress is the bad Caucasian. Why, Mr. Phelps, on an island like Leepoohu, all my work can be undone in a week—I was going to say in a day—by one brutal, drunken sailor, or one white woman of easy morals!"

Phelps nodded.

"If your natives see that a white does

not behave-"

"Naturally, they see no reason for behaving," the missionary completed the sentence. Then, with a shake of the head: "Surely, if we're anything at all, we're better humans than these mixed-bloods. Well, we ought to prove it by our conduct." As if the statement was a reminder to him, suddenly he turned toward the trader. "Didn't I see Gata Naro leaving here just now?" he asked.

With his silent laughter, Trupp set the

veranda trembling again.

"Yes, she was here," he replied, "throwing the kitten at me."

Instant displeasure made the face of the

missionary a trifle severe.

"Mr. Trupp," he said sorrowfully, "I'm afraid you don't see just how grave this question of Gata is."

An expression of irritation came into the

trader's small eyes.

"The girl's just a kid," he retorted.

"I'll admit she's full of the dickens, but

she don't mean no harm."

"Whether she means harm or not isn't the issue," argued Mr. Langdon, not without a touch of heat. "The point is that she's white. As such, she's a model for the natives. For some time I've felt that I've been losing ground with the women here on Leepcohu. I know why, too. It's on account of Gata!"

Now Trupp allowed himself a wink at

the stranger.

"She certainly cuts up a few tricks now and then," he asserted, somewhat boastfully; "but for a youngster that ain't got either father or mother, I think she's pretty good."

"The name Naro sounds Italian or

Spanish," Phelps observed.

"She's from southern Spain," explained Mr. Langdon. "About thirteen years ago her father came ashore from a schooner. White men were more unwelcome here then than they are now, but he wouldn't leave. Gata was only three years old at the time."

"And, say!" broke in Trupp. "Little as she was, that kid could fight and bite and scratch like a tiger; so they called her

Gata. It means 'cat.'"

"Old Nanoh's raised her," continued the missionary, "and been well kicked and cuffed for her pains. The poor soul had some help when Gata's father was alive. He knew how to manage the girl—with a length of bamboo; but now things are different. He's gone, and she's clean out of control. She runs the beach."

"What does she live on?" inquired

Phelps.

It was the trader who answered.

"Her father left her a few coconut trees. Britto's wife won't let the kid show her nose over there, so I buy the nuts. That gives Gata a charge account, and lets her pick out a few little things."

"All a great pity," declared Mr. Langdon, with a shake of the head. "She never has to lift her hand. She ought to have to work, to exert herself, instead of loafing away her life. It's heartbreaking to see her as lazy and ambitionless as a native."

"I suppose she hasn't had much chance to get an education," the stranger added.

"Plenty of chance," Mr. Langdon asserted, his tone once more showing anger; but she wouldn't take it. When she was little, I tried to teach her. She was a

bright child, and could have learned fast, but there was no keeping her at a book. She wouldn't study, and nobody would side with me in forcing her to. When she got older, she refused to leave Leepoohu to attend school. She has a voice—really an extraordinary voice. Vain as she is, though, do you think she'll go where she could get it cultivated? She thinks only of to-day, of being happy, and of having a good time. The natives call her the Butterfly. Well, that's all she is, poor child—a butterfly!"

"Pretty?" Phelps asked, but somewhat indifferently, as if concerned in making a polite show of interest in the subject rather

than in gaining information.

At the question, both the missionary and Trupp laughed; whereupon Phelps quickly glanced from one to the other, curious and

puzzled.

"The girl's a beauty!" rumbled Trupp.
"A reg'lar rip-snorter! I've heard men who've been all over the world say that they've never seen another girl as fine-looking—skin, hair, figure, eyes, teeth, features. A ship never touches here without fetching some present to her."

Mr. Langdon nodded.

"She's terribly beautiful," he supplemented sadly. "That's what has stood in her way. If only her character were as lovely as her face!"

"Aw, now, padre!" chided Trupp. "Be fair! Admit that the kid's got a lot of

spirit."

"Admirable spirit," concurred the missionary warmly; "if only she wouldn't conduct herself like a native, or even worse! For her brain, being white, can think up mischief that the brain of an islander can't."

"She'll turn out all right," Trupp promised. "She'll get ahead. You watch! That little monkey's ambitious!"

"Ambitious!" Mr. Langdon's tone was

deep with scorn.

"Not to know anything," explained the trader, "but to be somebody. The way she means to manage it is this—she'll marry high up."

"On Leepoohu the young lady won't have many first-class chances, will she?"

Phelps inquired, smiling.

"Sailors!" exploded the missionary.

"An occasional sea captain, pickled in salt and alcohol! A trader or two, and the commissioner!"

Trupp was not a whit nonplused. "Don't you worry, padre," he counseled. "One of these days some young chap will land on Leepoohu, Gata 'll take one good look at him, decide he's the one, and zip, his fish will be fried!"

"Your picture is charming," smiled Mr. Langdon, with more than a hint of sarcasm. "Only—you don't seem to take

the young man into account."

"You think she can't land a man if she wants him?" the trader demanded. "Padre, that youngster's got a way with her! Why,

nobody can help liking her!"

"But would a suitor keep on liking her?" argued Mr. Langdon. "Grant that some young man who amounts to anything were to marry Gata. Would marriage be a solution of the problem, the end of the story? Mr. Trupp, a girl has to be something more than beautiful to make a good wife. As a bachelor, my friend, haven't you lost sight of the fact that marriage means the steady companionship of two people, and that steady companionship demands certain qualities if it's to last?"

Trupp shook ponderously.

"No, I haven't lost sight of any of them facts, padre," he declared. "In fact, they're what have kept me single."

TIT

WHEN the good-natured laughter had subsided, Trupp turned to the stranger.

"Well, anyhow," he remarked slyly, as if he suspected why the missionary had gone into the subject so carefully, "after this talk, Mr. Phelps, you won't have no illusions about the kid, and so you won't be in no danger."

The younger man refrained from any

comment upon the statement.

"When am I to have the privilege of seeing Leepoohu's wonderful Butterfly?" he inquired.

"This morning, at church," answered

Mr. Langdon.

Warren Phelps opened his eyes in mild amazement.

"She goes to church?"

"She'll be there, all right, looking like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth," grinned Trupp. "Oh, she wouldn't miss it for a good deal! What's more, she'll round up every woman and girl in the settlement. Ain't that so, padre? Ain't she your best whipper-in?"

Mr. Langdon assented.

"Not that she cares a snap about me or my church," he explained. "She doesn't. You see, she stands out all the better by contrast with them. She never misses showing off herself and her voice, and making our rival trader, Mr. Britto, wish she'd notice him."

"What do the women think of her?"

Phelps asked.

"They hate her," Trupp acknowledged.

"They despise her. I'd hate to tell you what they'd give if she'd only catch the smallpox and die!"

" Jealous?" said Phelps.

"Sick with jealousy," Trupp answered.

Mr. Langdon did not agree.

"Six years ago, when she was only ten, and there wasn't any reason why the older women should be jealous of her in the way you mean, Mr. Trupp, they hated her as intensely as they do now. It's because she never let them forget her good looks, her voice, and her white blood. Whatever she thinks about them, out it comes."

"And they've never turned on her?"

asked Phelps.

The missionary looked at him with wide, grave eyes.

"Not yet, Mr. Phelps," he answered.

"You mean there's danger?"

"If a white woman conducts herself like a barbarian, isn't it probable that the native women will some day follow suit, and—go further?"

Trupp threw up his hands.

"I'll be awfully sorry for the Leepoohu ladies if they ever start anything," he de-

clared humorously.

"With the men of the island three hundred miles to the south," continued the missionary soberly, "and only the women here, I'd be sorry for Gata. When it comes to being ruthless and cruel, these native women far outstrip the men. I wish we had even one good policeman here!"

had even one good policeman here!"
"Now, padre!" chaffed the trader,
amused. "You don't really mean to say
that you think there'll ever be a rumpus?"

"So far as Gata's concerned," Mr. Langdon replied quietly, "I've felt for a long time that she's a young woman walking on the thin crust over a volcano."

Trupp laughed inordinately, so that his wheezy breath came short, and he coughed

chokingly.

"Christopher!" he exclaimed. "Not honestly, padre?"
"You don't see the signs," asserted the

missionary. Then, facing toward Phelps: "When you go up into the hills to look for timber," he went on, "I hope you won't let Gata know that you're starting. If you do, she'll be on your heels every second, and there'll be talk. I'm trying hard to give the girl some idea of how she ought to behave—to teach her, for instance, that she shouldn't go racing through the jungles with strangers."

At that, the full-moon countenance of the trader swiftly underwent a hardening process. Plainly displeased, with evident impatience he diverted the conversation.

"So you're a scout for a lumber company, Mr. Phelps?" he remarked.

"A forester-yes. I'm hoping to find some first-class hard wood on Leepoohu."

A strange smile began to play about Trupp's mouth. He raised his pale and

scanty eyebrows.

"Yes, and if you go far enough up into the jungle," he observed meaningly, "you're likely to find something more'n hard wood!"

Phelps stared at the speaker, then glanced toward the missionary, whose face was averted.

"Animals or snakes?" he asked.

"Biggest animals on this island," Trupp answered, "are deer and hog. And if there's a snake left-well, it's because Mr. Pig ain't found him yet.'

"Then you must mean people," con-

cluded Phelps.

The trader pushed up his huge shoulders

"Maybe it's people," he returned; "hill people, or tree people. Anyhow, for the last twenty years there's been whispering. White men will tell you that the center of Leepoohu ain't so uninhabited as she looks."

"If aborigines are up there, wouldn't you know?" insisted the younger man.

Trupp spread out his hands, and swung

his big head.

"Some question!" he exclaimed. lot of us wish we could answer it-don't we, padre? But here's the trouble—this island's all on end, like the side of a house, and such a tangle that if you was to cut a tree it couldn't fall. Why, white men ain't set foot on more'n twenty acres of Leepoohu. Of course, it's supposed "-he stressed the word-"that all the natives are down here around the settlement, wearing clothes, and making a play at looking civilized; but every little while something awful queer happens."

"What kind of a queer

Spooky?"

It was the missionary who answered

Phelps's question.

"The natives on the nearest islands are attacked-suddenly, in the night. The attackers must come from near by; but no canoes have gone out from this beach. So where have they started from? Nobody's able to say."

Phelps laughed.

"Well, there certainly isn't anything very spooky about war canoes," he said. "And I'll wager there are natives up in back. Maybe they don't want their ancient customs interfered with; so they stay hid and keep still,"

Trupp nodded.

"And bide their time," he added.

"I can hardly credit such a story as that," interposed the missionary. never see smoke, for instance, or hear drums—though the attacks I spoke of always happen when I'm away from Leepoohu. Furthermore, no visit is made to the particular island I happen to be on at the time. As for Mr. Trupp, he doesn't get about, and of a night he's asleep, and-

Now the trader broke in:

"And if the other white storekeeper on Leepoohu winks at the whole business, for the reason that he's married to a native-"

Mr. Langdon leaned forward in his chair and gave a quick glance about him.

"Not too loud, Mr. Trupp," he cautioned. "It's a ticklish subject, and these basket buildings can't be trusted."

" Banna's out in the cook shack," Trupp

answered reassuringly.

Phelps spoke again, but with caution.

"Look here!" he said. "You've got my curiosity roused. Don't stop now, please! I noticed from the schooner that there are two big gorges leading into the mountains from this side of the island, and-"

Trupp held up a fat finger.

"Exactly-two; and if you'll go up to where the gorges start, and take a look around, you'll see that a path leads into each one of them. The path on your right is called the Pool Path, because it takes you to a fine pool, where there's a small waterfall. Our native women chase to it all the time, and rinse their hair in the fresh water; but they never go past the pool."
"And the other path?"

"It's what they call tabu. It has a native name that means 'the spirit path without an end.' Our natives tell us they never go farther along it than a place called the dead line. Just the same, the trail beyond the dead line is well worn."

"With the feet of spirits?"

"Believe me," retorted Trupp, "spirits ain't the only ones that go up and down that path!"

Phelps addressed the missionary.

" Is this what you meant, Mr. Langdon," he asked, "when you said aboard the schooner that scouting Leepoohu might be precarious?"

"Yes—to go into the high regions, alone,

might be."

"I should say so!" concurred the trader. " No white man has passed the dead line, and gone up the trail?" asked Phelps.

Trupp nodded.

"Yes, once a white man did. He was a sailor, and a lot of sailors that was ashore with him got to talking about the Spirit Path, and how they'd like to know what was at the top end of it, and so on. He undertook to climb it, and find out. Well, since then nobody's followed suit."

"What did he find?" inquired Phelps. There was a queer gleam in Trupp's small eyes, and he shot a quick glance at

the missionary.

"Nobody knows," he answered, "be-cause—well, he never come back."

Mr. Langdon had been moving restlessly. Plainly, the subject was not one that he liked. Now he rose, and made as if to go.

"Wait, padre," bade Trupp, half rolling his ponderous frame sidewise. "You got to have something cool and wet before you start off." Then, raising his voice: "Leonie!"

A moment, and, answering his summons, a girl opened the woven front door of the store and stood on the sill.

"Yes, Mr. Trupp?" she asked briskly. As Phelps stood up beside the missionary, she gave the latter a smiling nod and

the vounger man a swift glance.

She was a fair-haired, frank-faced young Her features were not regular, and her coloring was not striking, though her skin had the clear whiteness of milk; but her gray eyes had in them something that was magnetic. Moreover, her expression was both sympathetic and vivacious, and she carried herself with an air of sureness and resourcefulness.

Trupp cast up one eye, noting the wide hat of palm fiber which rested on her bright hair, and her crisp dress of freshly ironed

gingham.

'You're ready for church, ain't you?" he demanded apologetically. "I was going to ask if you'd mind fetching us some of that bottled soda out of the sack on the back veranda."

" Not at all."

She went, with no second glance for the

" Miss Vannier has charge of Mr. Trupp's store," Mr. Langdon explained.

"She's a grand girl, I can tell you," Trupp declared heartily. "Not a beauty, as you can see, but neat and smart."

The missionary thrust up his chin.

"Leonie's beauty," he returned, " is the kind that grows on the beholder; and that's the best kind. She's a fine, sweet, un-spoiled, substantial citizen. The world couldn't get on without women like her. They're the backbone of civilization.'

"Well, I know I couldn't get along without her," said Trupp. "She's been here a year, and I've never had to tell her twice about anything. Goes right ahead, steady Works hard. Can do anyas a clock. thing-keep books, wait on customers, and

run the chow department."

Leonie came back with glasses and the soda, and set her tray upon a small table, which Phelps hastened to place beside his host. Then she went down the steps and away, across the sandy mounds of the open space, toward the white church steeple which shot up, knifelike, above a mass of brilliant green.

Mr. Langdon watched her go, sipping

his drink.

"She's a great help to me," he declared gratefully. "She makes friends among the brown sisters, and stands forth as a sound example. I wish Leepoohu had a few more white women like her!"

Trupp grinned.
"Oh, Leonie's a girl after your own heart, padre," he conceded; "but it takes all kinds of ladies to keep the old world going—the Gatas along with the Leonies. Ain't I right?"

IV

THE next moment there sounded the deep-toned moo-oo-oom, moo-oo-oom, moo-00-00m of the church call, beaten out upon a hollow cylinder of wood. At once the

missionary set down his glass and opened the blue umbrella, and, with Phelps walking beside him, went plodding away through

the sand in Leonie's wake.

"The whole problem of the South Seas," he declared to the younger man, as he went along, "is the presence of the white and the native in the same community. It's bad for both. The white doesn't behave, and that gives the native an excuse for acting bad. The result is a general slipping back toward everything that civilization is fighting against. Men and women spend their whole lives trying to save the brown from the white, and the white from the brown."

"You're discouraged?" Phelps ventured.
"I'm weary," the other confessed; "but, I hope, not impatient. Mr. Trupp sits back there with a sort of rosy veil across his eyes. I do not let my optimism blind me to facts. I can see far enough ahead to know that right here, on this bit of paradise, ugly things will eventually happen; and I shall like to remember that I did my utmost."

There were tears in the kindly eyes as the missionary ended.

"What's the chief bone of contention

here, Mr. Langdon?"

"The same old bone that the nations of the world worry over—power. Here we have two races, and also a mixture of both, with the white man, as always, determined to rule. As I told you a little while ago, Leepoohu has never wanted the white man as a resident; but it is the occasional presence of a government cutter that angers them most. For weeks after it shows up, they writhe and plot."

"Do they want you out?"

" Not, I think, as long as white traders are here, and there is government espionage. They know that my sympathies are with them, that I'm thinking of their best good, and have no selfish ax to grind. They understand, too, that a large part of my work consists in keeping the traders in line. Did you ever consider what a lot of unpleasant criticism there is of the missionary out here? It's mostly trader pro-We parsons have our eyes on them, and they don't like it; so they get back at us, though often they wouldn't be safe without us. That's the condition on Leepoohu. So far, for one reason or another, these islanders haven't struck; but there's a train of gunpowder laid through these lovely groves, Mr. Phelps, and some

day the match will be lighted that will set it off."

When the two men approached the door of the church, they found a large portion of the congregation gathered about it, chatting and laughing as they waited. In respect of color, the scene was savagely gay. Those brilliant spots on the beach had transferred themselves to the churchyard, and not only had multiplied themselves, but had added new hues that fairly stabbed the eyes—purple, bright yellow, peacock blue.

Except for a few very old men and half a dozen little boys, it was wholly a gathering of women; and that these women were a mixture of insular and Asiatic strains was apparent. In the gaudily dressed group, which was made up of all ages and sizes, were to be seen big-waisted, heavy-haunched, ample-bosomed women with wide, olive faces and round, gentle eyes. There were others noticeably small and spare-bodied. The features of these inclined toward the Javanese types, or had that dark sharpness which is found among the Arabs. The eyes of many had the narrow, upward-slanting cut of the Celestial.

Smiling his greetings, and shaking hands on all sides, the missionary made his way as quickly as possible through the crowd and into the church, where the other half of the congregation was waiting, seated on the long, worn benches to either side of the main aisle. At the rear of these benches, Phelps stopped, and edged his way past two or three gaping boys.

Soon the small room was half filled. Then the strangely assorted congregation stood up, and, with the missionary bending forward over the keys of a wheezy little melodeon, broke into the opening hymn.

A singer flanked Mr. Langdon at either side. To his left was Leonie Vannier, her look lowered to the page of her hymn book. Despite her hat of native make, in her neat gingham dress she fitted into the background of this transplanted New England church.

The simplicity of her dress, the fairness of her complexion and hair, but, most of all, the modesty of her bearing, brought into startling contrast the girl on the missionary's other hand. This was Gata—a changed Gata, fairly radiant in her go-to-church costume, which, however, would have been better suited to a festival in the grove. The effect was that of a gorgeous

orchid beside a self-effacing daisy. To the stranger at the back of the room, it was plain why Leepoohu called the younger girl

a butterfly.

This morning she was a butterfly all glistening black. About her slender figure, wrapped rather than draped, to bring out every sinuous curve of her round, pliant slenderness, she wore a soft sateen dress, with the bodice cut low, and no sleeves to speak of. Her skirt ended just below the knee.

Fortunately for the effect that she produced, as she stood singing, the congregation could not see her badly mended black cotton stockings, which ended in old, low, and much soiled shoes of white canvas.

For the appearance of her throat and head Gata had taken the greatest care. The result was picturesque and highly attractive. Her curling, purplish hair was pinned high, so that it added to her height. Upon it, arranged artfully in Spanish fashion, rested a breadth of delicate black lace.

It was the right touch. From under the tracery of silken threads her face shone in exotic beauty, the lustrous eyes, red mouth, and rich skin properly emphasized. As she sang, her book held before her in one small hand, and her look fixed beyond the benches and the women and the open door, to the blue of a cloudless sky and the deeper blue of the sea, she might have been, to a painter, the inspiration for an angelic young figure of St. Cecilia.

Above the voices of all the others, clear and full and fervent, rose her voice, sweet

"O-o-oh, sa-a-ail away,

O'er the o-o-ocean,
To join wi' tha' bri' angel ba-a-an'!
O-o-oh, sa-a-a-ail away,
O'er the o-o-ocean,
To a home in tha' happ-ee, happ-ee la-a-a-an'!"

The melodeon went on with an interlude. Meanwhile, those dusky, velvet eyes came back from their far seeing to take a triumphant survey of the benches. Suddenly, in their straying, they caught sight of Phelps. They stopped, focused, and stared. Their thick lashes stood up in pleased surprise. Then, for an instant, as another verse began, the scarlet lips trembled around the opening word of it, forgetting to pronounce it—and the instrument, Leonie Vannier, the missionary, and two-score women's voices swept on with the melody, leaving Gata behind.

But only for a few bars. Then, with eyes sparkling, with the faint damask in her cheeks deepening to a full rose, and with a proudful toss of her lace-draped head, once more she took from all the others the leading of the song. After that, excited, exultant, and tempting the look of the well-dressed stranger with all the arts and graces known to her, she sang only for him.

From a front seat across the aisle there was fixed upon her, in unconcealed hate, a pair of big eyes set in a small face—brownish eyes, hard, piercing, burning. They belonged to Eleenay Britto, the native wife

of Arnold Britto.

Eleenay was seated beside her husband, who was still sulky after his quarrel with Trupp, and after the scorching reproofs of a spouse who had seen him standing with the dangerous Gata. To avoid possible trouble, following the conclusion of the morning services, through taking even one glance at the songster beside the melodeon, the trader now kept his own look circumspectly lowered to the floor.

Elecnay's eyes were her best feature. Hers was a strangely shaped face, the fore-head being so overfull, so big-domed, that its bulge was almost grotesque. Below it were thin cheeks that tapered to a pointed and aggressive chin. Lacking freshness of color, the brown of this small visage was light enough to show every one of its dark

freckles.

Eleenay wore no hat. This allowed her sparse, half kinky, dull black hair to be seen. Long strands of it fell to her heavy brows, knitted at the moment in nervous watchfulness, so that a deep furrow led down between them to a nose which lacked a bridge. As she rapidly shifted her glance about, she drew back her thin lips to show little teeth, betel-stained and broken, and scuffed bare feet thrust into native slippers. Looking at her, it was easy to see that here was the hysterical woman who had left upon the countenance of the man beside her all those marks of the knife.

V

THE service at an end, and many of the congregation pushing forward to have a word with the missionary, Phelps went out into the blazing sun and back toward Trupp's place. After him followed most of the young members of the congregation, walking with Leonie Vannier. Some were

barefooted, others had crowded their toes into shoes, and minced painfully. Still others, preferring comfort to elegance, stopped for a moment to take off the civilized contrivances which tortured them. Then they came on in their stockinged feet, proudly carrying the offending articles.

Gata was not among them. It was due to the repeated admonitions of Mr. Langdon that, at church, she did not have her hair dressed with scarlet hibiscus blossoms, like many of the native girls. Now she was scurrying up and away to gather some of the gaudy flowers, and to fling her lace head covering through the home kajang Then, her black mane after old Nanoh. once more sweeping her sloping white shoulders, and the crown of petals in place, she paused only to pin the shiny folds of her sateen a trifle more tightly about her pliant figure, and to raise a gorgeous-tinted paper parasol, before hurrying down through the palm grove to Trupp's.

When she came in sight of the store, she slowed her pace. Now she walked with a high head that was tipped slightly to one side, like the picture of a beautiful girl she had once seen on an advertising calendar. She even contrived to switch a skirt so

closely wound.

However, all these preparations for making a proper appearance before the trader's steps came to nothing, since, on turning the corner of Trupp's veranda, she found no one sitting there except the fat proprietor himself.

He showed all of his big teeth at her

knowingly.

"Ha, ha!" he teased. "What's the Butterfly fluttering around here for, eh?"

Gata lowered the parasol and made a face at him.

"Aw, you shut!" she commanded, speak-

ing under her breath.

As she joined him, and cast a quick glance into the store, curiosity, eagerness, and excitement lent her dark eyes a diamond shine.

"You're a wonder, kid!" Trupp told her

in a whisper.

Leaving him giggling and heaving with mirth on his grass lounge, Gata entered the store, where the hot glare of outdoors gave place to a half gloom that seemed cooler than it was. The gloom was filled with movement, and a lively snapping came from a general nibbling at hard, sweet crackers. Close to the door were grouped most of the native girls, holding young brothers and sisters by the hand. Through these Gata pushed her way imperiously.

"You!" she said to them. "Get out w'en w'ite girl comes! Hear me? I don' low tattoo natifs for stan' in way!"

Quickly, and with apparent good nature, they made a lane for her, all the while keeping their eyes keenly upon the stranger idling at one side, as if to note how her arrival and conduct would affect him. When she was past them all, they closed in behind her.

Then she paused. Her look, as it swept the place, located Leonie, busy with her duties behind a counter, but did not rest

on the young man.

"Leonie," she began, observing the other girl from under languidly drooping lashes, "han' over for me one tins of cracker an' one tins of cheese."

Leonie promptly set out the purchases.

"Here you are!"

"Sharge him to my bills," Gata added with an air.

Before advancing to take up the tins, she wandered toward the rear of the store, where hung a small square of mirror, and took a careful survey of herself in it. When she turned about, the languid air was gone.

"O-oh, w'at lots of terrible mouth noise tham natifs make!" she cried. "Say! All you go 'long out! Don' stan' there jus' for rubber! Go 'long, I tall you!"

The store's owner, hearing the order through the open door, laughed till his spheres of fat fairly danced upon his big

frame.

"Ain't she the ticket?" he demanded of no one in particular. "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The group obeyed Gata's order, and went, only one resentful girl venturing to grumble in her own tongue. The store cleared, Gata came back to the tins she had bought, sprang up to a seat beside them, tore them open with a practiced hand, and soon was swinging her white-shod feet and crunching merrily.

"Say!" Again she addressed Leonie, now busily picking up bits of wrapping paper thrown down by her late customers. "How bout tham powder an' awther face thing I tall you get for me long tam' ago? Shees come on Flyaway you think, eh?"

"I don't know, Gata," was the answer.

"The cases aren't up from the beach yet.

When they come, and I open them, then

"You bes' hurry up with tham case," advised Gata haughtily severe. "I like for have them thing. I wait long tam' now, you remember. When I spen' much moneys in thees place, an' buy lots of thing from you, I like for have them before two, t'ree year!"

"We'll give the matter our prompt attention," Leonie promised, a roguish smile

playing about her mouth.

It was then that Gata permitted herself, as if for the first time, to see the newcomer on Leepoohu. She opened wide, innocent eyes at him, blinked her long lashes, and parted her red lips in pretty surprise.

"How do?" she exclaimed, her tone a honeyed echo of Leonie's best. "W'en is

you come?"

χf

ıt

The white shoes stopped their swinging. Phelps, helmet in hand, bowed slightly.

"This morning," he answered, "by the

Flyaway."

Wiping the last crumb from her mouth, Gata slipped from her perch and went toward him with a languid, sidling swing.

"Wa-a-all! You was the strange mans

in church, wasn' you?"

Her eyes seeking his, the Spanish girl halted close to him. He looked at her curiously and admiringly, coloring a little with embarrassment.

"Yes, I was there."

"W'at's your name?"

" Phelps."

" Phalps! I don' hear tha' name before -Phalps!"

He smiled at her pronunciation, and for a moment they stood, face to face, studying each other, and not speaking. Then, with a deep breath and a sidelong glance, Gata spoke again:

"Awther w'ite mans don' go to church so moch."

" I see!"

There were certain opinions which she was anxious that he should express in Leonie's presence. She moved to invite them.

"So you hears me singing, don' you?" she asked.

" Yes."

She stared.

"Don' I sing gran'?" she demanded, more astonished than resentful at his lack of enthusiasm.

" Indeed you do."

"I glad you t'inks so."

After that, for a little while, she toed the floor, meditating.

"How long you gets for know Leonie Vannier?" she inquired presently. "You ol' frien' for her?"

"Oh, no-I've just had the pleasure of

meeting Miss Vannier."

Gata's eyes still smiled, but, as they lifted, they narrowed.

"Leonie, she is soch nice woman," she condescended. "How ol' you t'ink she is?"

Phelps darted a glance at the girl across the store, who was behind the counter once more, industriously setting a shelf to rights. "I-I never ask about the age of any young lady," he returned, with a show of confusion.

Gata waved aside the objection.

"You don' ask," she persisted, "but how ol' you t'ink? Jus' make guess at her. Leonie, look 'roun'!"

Leonie looked, showing a smiling face.

Phelps returned the smile.

" Miss Vannier, I think, is not more than twenty," he declared.

"Twanty!" Gata threw up both hands. "No-o-o! She is moch more ol'! Shees ver' ol'-twanty-t'ree!"

"Yes, I'm twenty-three," Leonie admitted cheerfully. "In ten months I'll be twenty-four."

"O-oh! Twanty-four!" exclaimed Gata. Eight more years as I!"

"You don't look it, Miss Vannier,"

Phelps asserted gallantly.

"Oh, yes, she do!" contradicted Gata. "I t'ink she do. I t'ink shees look more as twanty-four. Leonie, she is older 'n you."

"No, I'm older than Miss Vannier. I'm

twenty-six."

"Oh, twanty-six are young for mans," argued Gata; "but for woman it are ol'it are w'at you call ol' maid age."

At that Leonie laughed heartily; whereupon those dusky eyes narrowed.

shaft had not pained.

"Jus' a same, Messer Phalps," Gata went on, with a show of wisdom, "Leonie, she is moch too ol' for you."

From outside, Trupp had been listening to the conversation. Now, as both Phelps and Leonie greeted Gata's declaration with an outburst of mirth, he broke into it.

"Say, you are a case!" he called to Gata.

"You certainly are!"

He broke into loud guffaws. The Spanish girl joined in the amused chorus, as if she understood that the others fathomed

the workings of her mind.

"Oh, I don' worry 'bout Leonie," she bragged; "'cause all w'ite mans like me ver' moch, an' don' be crazy for Leonie. Ain' tha' so, Leonie?"

Again that frank and hearty smile.

"Absolutely so," agreed the elder girl, with the mollifying tone that a grown person might use with a child. "I'm not pretty. You're the one that men admire; and you're so beautiful that I don't blame them."

The velvet eyes opened and softened. The scarlet mouth instantly grew sweet.

"But Leonie, she is awful fine woman," Gata told the stranger, moved to generosity by Leonie's praise of her. "Good almos' like Messer Lang'on. An' "—sorrowfully—"shees work hard. Terr'ble for w'ite girls, working like ol' natif womans! I got nice han's; but poor Leonie—look, Messer Phalps, at her han's!"

Phelps seemed scarcely to be listening. As if something outside the store were claiming his attention, he strolled toward

the door.

Crackers in one hand, cheese in the other, Gata walked beside him, springingly, on her toes, and with a flirt of her narrow skirt. As she crossed the sill, over a shoulder she threw a glance at Leonie. In the big, dark eyes was a gleam of triumph.

VI

THE day was roasting hot. The sea, unwrinkled by any perceptible motion, and glazed by the grilling sun, pained the eye. The slope before the store sent up wave after wave of air that was like colorless smoke.

In response to an order conveyed by Leonie, a native woman, who was nearly as large as her employer, and who still wore her loose, flapping church dress, brought more sack-cooled soda to the front veranda. Though Phelps and Gata were seated there with Trupp, the servant ostentatiously placed but two glasses beside the bottled drink. The girl, not failing to notice this, tried to catch the bloodshot eyes of the woman, and all the while kept up the low humming of a monotonous tune.

"Don't sing that thing!" admonished Trupp irritably, when the trio were alone again. "You know Banna hates it. What are you trying to do—get my cook on her

ear?"

Gata had her share of the soda. Phelps insisted that she should take her drink before he had any. This gave her an opportunity to establish a partnership in the glass. Now she would sip, smiling coquettishly at him over the rim; next she would turn the glass half around and proffer it to him.

Soon Trupp was fast asleep, his great yellow head to one side, a dead cigarette falling from a corner of his half open mouth. Then Gata, keeping her voice low, so as not to waken the storekeeper, set herself to the entertainment of the newcomer.

"For w'y you comes to Leepoohu?" she

wanted to know.

Phelps recalled the cautionary advice of the missionary.

"I'm just stopping over," he answered evasively.

"You don' does nawt'ing?" she persisted. "Nawt'ing at all?"

"Maybe I'll have a look around," he added.

"Ai!" She saw another opportunity.
"I shows you Leepoohu! S'pose we go now for look at him? You don' sees beach yet. You don' sees uphill ways. Oh, thees ver' beautiful places! I shows him all to you—come!"

"I'm afraid it's too hot to go sight-see-

ing now," Phelps parried.

She shook her flower-crowned head at him.

"Not hot on hill in shade," she declared.
"Le's go—ha?"

"I think I'd rather stay on the porch."

She was careful not to combat him.

"You stay long w'iles on thees islan'?" she inquired.

"Well, maybe."

She leaned toward him, all eagerness.

"You stays!" she said earnestly. "Leepoohu ver' bes' islan' for you! You love him? So! You stays! I like you stays!"

The last sentence was accompanied by

a soft look of entreaty.

"What would I do here?" he asked, amused.

"Don' do nawt'ing," she laughed.

He shook his head at her.

"Oh, that wouldn't be proper at all," he declared. "It's all right for girls to take things easy, but a man must always have something to do."

"I tall you w'at!" She pointed the finger of discovery. "You kip stores!"

"I couldn't very well do that here," he

argued. "Leepoohu has two stores already, and good ones. What would the island do with three?"

Her eagerness grew.

"But if one store here go," she suggested, "maybe you stays then? Too bad 'cause Britto not go 'way. Hee's no good anyhow—drunk all tam'."

A little later, when a welcome wind rose, and Trupp wakened hungry, he sent the

girl home.

"You have to treat her exactly like a child," he declared. "If I'd let her, she'd take every meal of her life here, and never say thanks. It's strange about that kid. Raised among the native children, she's exactly like them—no pride when it comes to begging, or getting in a man's way, and all that."

"And as Mr. Langdon said, she certainly speaks her mind."

Trupp wabbled in glee.

"Don't she, though? She makes 'em all stand around. Nobody else could; but she's so cute, she gets away with it all right. Don't you think she's something worth looking at?"

Phelps nodded appreciatively.

"She's the most beautiful girl I've ever

She had eaten her midday meal of fish and taro, and was back on Trupp's front veranda before the trader and his guest had finished their dinner. While the men smoked and lounged, she played with the kitten, broke in upon the conversation with her lively chatter, and laughed hilariously at the trader's jokes.

Late in the afternoon there was a second service at the church. When she found that Phelps would not attend it, she stayed where she was, so only Leonie stood beside the melodeon — a circumstance which, toward sunset, brought Mr. Langdon back to

Trupp's.

Gata understood that she was to be reproved, and assumed an air of insolent indifference. The missionary did not permit this to interfere with what he had to say. He did not hesitate, either, because Phelps, the embarrassed object of his warnings, was there beside him.

"I fully understand why you wouldn't trouble yourself to come to afternoon prayer," he told her severely. "You didn't care to leave this young man who's just landed. Well, my child, don't get any wild ideas into your head."

"W'at you talks, wild?" she demanded, the dusky eyes taking fire and showing a rim of white. "I don' belong your church. Guess maybe I don' sing for you no more. Bad sin, that, for me sing your church!"

"I can read you like a book," Mr. Langdon went on. "I know how you act every time a stranger steps on the beach; but Mr. Phelps isn't like the others you meet—sailors, and tramps, and roustabouts. Mr. Phelps comes of a fine family, and he isn't going to think well of a girl who speaks like a native and doesn't go to church."

"W'at you like for say?" Gata demanded. "You don' be please 'cause I have Messer Phalps for frien', ha? You bees talk with Leonie, and Leonie, shees j'alous. Shees like me for stay 'way up in jungle house, an' leave Messer Phalps for her!"

"Leonie is a little lady," asserted Mr. Langdon. "Leave her name out of this

argument."

Phelps had colored, looking his natural discomfiture.

"I hope I'm not going to be a bone of contention," he declared, trying to laugh. "Anyhow, I'm not a heart smasher; and

I haven't been noticing anybody, Mr. Langdon."

"You wouldn't have to, so far as this girl is concerned," answered the elder man. "What I came to tell you is that I've got to leave at once. Old Aimata is very sick at Strong's Island, and I feel obliged to see her."

At that, Gata danced up and down with

delight

"Good ol' laydee!" she cried. "I glad shees sick. If tha' makes you go, I hopes shees die!"

"You mean that," he told her. "The suffering of others, or their grief, doesn't matter to you at all. Nevertheless, I want to beg you to be a good girl while I'm gone. Don't tag this gentleman about every minute—he won't like it. Back where he comes from, nice girls don't run about at the heels of men they don't know."

"I don' care w'at they do," answered Gata calmly, and curved her rosy mouth

to whistle.

"Well, don't expect to be treated with respect if you don't deserve respect," Mr. Langdon went on. "I've urged you to study, and read, and learn, and—"

"Do, re, mi, fa!" sang Gata, mimicking a music lesson of his which, at some period in the past, had come to a stormy end.

"Some day, my poor child, when you've got vourself into serious trouble, vou'll want my friendship."

"You know w'at I says to you? I tall

you back, Sticknose!"

"You think looks are everything," continued Mr. Langdon.

"I are beautiful," was the proud reply. " Mos' beautiful in all thees islan'."

"Pretty is as pretty does," concluded the padre.

Gata kicked her bare toes against the matting.

" Puh!" she scorned.

Mr. Langdon gone, Gata was not able to learn what Phelps thought of all this. He did not speak unless he was spoken to; he kept his clean-shaven face averted.

As Gata watched him, there was a strange wonder in her large, soft eyes. Just as Mr. Langdon had said, how different was this newcomer from all the other men who had visited Leepoohu - sailors, traders, stray tourists, adventurers, officials, scientists, and good-for-nothings! He differed most from them in the fact that he seemed all but unaware of a beauty that had astonished every one else, troubled many of them, and conquered not a few.

Two or three times she was able to coax his look her way. Then his lips smiled at her: but his eyes, dark blue and full of understanding, had in them something which she could not fathom-something which, while it puzzled her, also kept her at a distance, yet whetted her desire to please him. Hungry for the admiration which never before had been withheld, her own mind made up, her own restless heart fairly captured, her single desire was to win him.

At nightfall, when the missionary's outrigger was launched, forgetting that there had been stern reproof on the one hand and impudence on the other, Gata went running and leaping down across the sandy slope to the water's edge.

"Say, Messer Lang'on," she pleaded, " you not tall to Messer Phalps that I not

nice!"

He understood, and answered with sor-

rowful tenderness.

"My poor little straying lamb!" he ex-"If you'd ever done what I claimed. wanted you to do-studied, and improved yourself, and learned to behave - you'd have a real chance at happiness now. Gata, looks aren't enough. The world is full of pretty girls, Can you grasp that? And many of them have not only beauty, but they're modest and sweet and good. My dear child, why haven't you ever listened to me?"

"Messer Lang'on, I lis'n this tam'," she declared. "You halp me, an' I do w'at you savs-all. I go church, sing planty, pray awful moch, read Bible-ever't'ing!"

He shook a gentle head at her.

"So you're going to bargain with me, are you? I can have your soul to save, if I'll recommend you to this young man?" "Tha's ri'," she told him.

BACK at the store, the place seemed deserted. Trupp was there, a traveling rug over his huge legs, while he sat, discouraging the mosquitoes with his cigar smoke. and enjoying the welcome cool. was at the back of the house, also having a cigar; but Leonie was gone, the trader did not know where. As for the stranger, Trupp thought he might have rambled up the beach with some of the children.

The moon was up, and the beach lay like a twisting white road. Gata dropped down and watched it, craning and listening. Presently she heard voices. Several figures were coming along that gleaming path; but as she sprang up, a wild pounding in her breast, she saw that Phelps was not with the children.

When Trupp arranged a mosquito net about his lounge and fell asleep, she took to pacing to and fro. Two hours passed, and still the stranger did not put in an appearance. As shown by the pin points of light that yellowed the weave of the outer wall of one corner of the building, Leonie had come home-silently, and evidently from the rear; but where was he?

At a late hour Trupp awoke, demanded to know what under the shining sun she was doing there on his veranda, and peremptorily ordered her to go home. went-a few rods. Where she could watch every approach to the store, she halted and sat down.

Presently, chancing to glance toward the church, she noted that a lamp was burning in the front room of the house next to it-Mr. Langdon's tiny bungalow. Then she guessed rightly that, in the absence of the missionary, Phelps was staying there.

She got up and hurried that way; but when the low white gate was reached, she hesitated to pass through it, to go up the

short path to the front door and make herself known.

"Messer Lang'on not like tha'," she argued.

What the missionary liked or disliked was of no matter to her, except that in this case the shy stranger might be equally displeased. Then there was Kuruh, she of the pockmarks and the thin, bald head. Between Mr. Langdon's housekeeper and Gata was a feud of long standing, so that the girl never ventured inside the gate unless the missionary was at her elbow.

As she stood, her slender hands clasped upon her breast, her black eyes fixed on the house that sheltered Phelps, she sighed wistfully. She had never before needed Kuruh's friendship; she had never missed a chance to feed the hate of the native. Now, if they were not enemies, she would be able to make good use of the woman. Also, might it not raise her in the estimation of the newcomer if she could show him that she was popular on Leepoohu?

When the light in the little bungalow went out, she strayed homeward—to find old Nanoh anxiously teetering about the thatched hut on her bare and wrinkled feet. The solicitude of the aged creature only served to anger the impatient girl.

"Don' you snoop affer me!" she warned.
"You go lay down!"

She stretched herself out on a mat, but not to sleep. It seemed to her that some one was lingering before the hut. She got up and stole out. Here and there were deep shadows, unpierced by the dazzling moon. She went from one dark spot to another, thinking to find a waiting figure.

He was not out there; yet she was not convinced that he was any more indifferent than she. She was the incomparable beauty of Leepoohu. Once having seen her, how could he help caring for her? Was she not, as more than one man had declared, the most beautiful girl in the world?

"I knows w'at," she told herself consolingly. "Hees 'fraid for like me, 'cause maybe I turns him down!"

Tossing on her mat, she who had always mocked at any affection shown her now found herself seared by the same flame. She pressed her palms to her hot cheeks, and over and over she murmured a name.

"How I keeps him here on Leepoohu?" she asked herself. "How? Ai, I wan' him, I wan' him!"

Wearied by her wakefulness, and by the

strength of her emotions, next morning she slept later than usual. After a careful toilette, it was long after sunrise when, her throat well dusted with powder, and hibiscus flowers in her hair, she sauntered down past the little house next to the church. Phelps was not in sight. Kuruh was, and Gata fairly recoiled from the black frown that the native woman gave her.

For the ears of him who might be just inside, Gata sweetened the greetings she gave the servant.

"Hal-lo!" she sang out. "Ain' we got one gran' day?"

"Skiddoo!" growled Kuruh.

That called for a retort in kind. Then Gata raced to Trupp's.

As usual, the corpulent trader was stretched on his lounge. She bounded up his steps and to the threshold of the front door, with something of the flowing motion of a bird coming to alight.

"W'ere hees go?" she demanded, with a sudden turn of her flower-garlanded head.

Trupp lifted his lashless eyelids, and there was a provoking light in his yellowgray eyes.

"I've got him here in my pocket," he answered.

She whirled, giving him a smart shove on a shoulder.

"W'ere?" she insisted impatiently.

The trader gurgled.

"Somebody likes a certain lad," he declared slyly.

"Trupp!" She shut the door and satbeside him, leaning over him and lowering her voice. "You tall trut'."

"You're a quick worker!"
"I likes for marry him."

"I don't blame you. Well?"

"I says to him, 'W'y you don' kip store on Leepoohu?' Hees say, 'Two store now, so t'ree too many.' But, Trupp!" She raised a wise forefinger. "If Arnol' go 'way, Messer Phalps stay all ri'. W'at you t'ink?"

For a while Trupp did not reply, but went on with his smoking, taking his cigar from between his lips and putting it back with a machinelike regularity, and studying her face between half closed lids.

"There's nothing wrong with that pretty head of yours," he conceded at length.

She was triumphant.

"Ain' I ri'? Ain' I? Trupp, I sure! Sure!" Then, straightening, and clenching

her fists: "Arnol' Britt', hees finish on Leepoohu!"

" M-m!"

There was a second wait, while this strange pair of plotters continued to look at each other, Gata quivering with excitement, Trupp composed, curious, calculating.

"Las' ni', w'at you t'ink I do?" she went on presently. "Trupp, like Messer Lang'on tall to me, I make my brains work; an' I knows w'at makes Arnol' jump

out!"

Trupp did not comment on that. Instead, with a show of great enthusiasm, he

declared:

"Say, Phelps is one fine boy! Any girl would be mighty lucky to land him, Gata. Handsome as a picture, and I believe he's got quite a few dollars."

"I marries with him," she went on.

"But"—cautiously—"maybe hees not like for talk marry; so don' you spik so to

him."

"Sure I won't! Trust me, kid! But, as you say, he's bound to like you.

Why—'

"You t'ink so? You sure?" Her face was pale with eagerness. "Oh, Trupp, all las' night I don' sl'ip—I can'! Trupp, I crazy 'bout him!"

He chuckled, taking a small hand in his. "Go to it, kid!" he told her. "You'll get what you want; but "—in turn, he was cautious—"whatever you do, keep it under your hat. I don't want to hear about it—see? Then I can truthfully say that I don't know anything. Now remember—look out! Go slow! Watch your step!"

"Ai, don' you worry. I smart! But

w'ere hees go-w'ere?"

The trader gave a sidewise tip of his big head.

"Up the beach. Took along Kuruh's boys, for guides."

In wrathful disappointment, Gata pound-

ed her knees with both fists.

"But w'y he don' ask me for guide him?" she mourned. "Kuruh's boys! Huh! Bot' got coconuts for head! W'en hees come back?"

"Couple of days." She was appalled.

"W'at? So long? Trupp!"

But the next moment something had caught her attention, and she was on her feet, staring toward the other store. Away from Britto's veranda was hurrying a small figure, with a long wrapper flapping behind it. Gata gave Trupp a portentous wink, whipped down his steps, and darted off toward the rival establishment.

Britto's store was much smaller than Trupp's. Down the whole of its length, toward the back, there swung from the bamboo rafters long strips of matting, which formed a heavy curtain to shut off the space reserved for living quarters. As for the place of business, it was wanting both in cleanliness and neatness. On its shelves there was no sorting of the stock in hand. Tinned foods, jars of colored candy, bolts of red cotton, fish lines, flour, tobacco, nails, sugar, and a hundred other articles were jumbled together.

The single counter was also a scramble. The floor was fairly hidden by empty boxes, rope, wire, barrels, and sacking. Hanging against a wall were a lantern and a hammock made of bright-colored cord.

When Gata entered from the front veranda, Britto was alone, leaning on his counter, engaged in marking figures in a small account book with a stub of a pencil. As he glanced up, his bold eyes noted that she had on her Sunday sateen, shoes and stockings, and a wreath.

Pausing to get her breath, she struck her

most becoming pose.

"Hallo!" she purred, her head on one side.

"Hello, you!" He kept his voice low. "Say, you'd better keep away from here!"

She laughed carelessly and came nearer, her arms akimbo, her slender body sway-

ing languidly.

"Now wy you says that?" she chided in a cooing voice. "All tam' w'en I comes, you says to me, 'Go 'way!' Wha's matter, Arnol'? Ain' you skipper in thees store?"

He gave a jerk of the head toward the mat wall, then again bent over his book.

"You know well enough what I mean," he said significantly.

She came to prop herself on the counter in front of him.

"O-oh, Arnol'!" she teased. "W'ite mans is 'fraid to hees natif wifes! Boo! Boo! But I not 'fraid to her. Shees Chino, shees Malay!"

She challenged him from under her long lashes. He straightened and backed away

from her.

"You're up to mischief!" he declared. "You'd better go along. Eleenay don't want you around. Go on!" Suddenly she shed her coquetry.

"I tall w'at I comes for," she announced.

"Nanoh, shees like for have coal oil—one bottle."

Relieved, he turned, put aside the matting at the end of the counter, and disappeared behind it. A moment later he had crossed the rear veranda and was entering a small building that served as a storage shed.

As she heard his key in the shed lock, Gata acted. With one quick look around to make sure that no one was watching her from the front veranda, she lifted herself to the top of the counter and reached across the space between counter and shelves. High up on a shelf were three mantles of light Chinese silk, coarsely woven, flimsy, but dyed brilliantly in various shades to give a rainbow effect. Seizing one of them, she thrust it out of sight in her bodice, and stepped down.

As Britto came through the hanging mats with the bottle, he found her lolling where he had left her.

"Here you are," he said hurriedly. "Take it, and hop along."

Her fingers closed about the neck of the

"Say!" she retorted resentfully. "You talk like you is marry with me! Before you boss me, Arnol', better you boss your natif wifes!"

Then, with a flirt of the black skirt, she was out of the front door. When she had turned the corner of the house, she halted—on the side that was toward Trupp's—and waited. Presently she could hear the swift shuffle of feet. Eleenay was coming back. Head up, and humming carelessly, she emerged into the other woman's view.

Eleenay halted, baring her stained teeth, taking in her breath with a hissing sound, glaring through the loose strands of her dull, kinky hair.

The bottle swinging in time to her song, Gata did not pause, or so much as turn her garlanded head; so the other shuffled on, calling out a shrill summons to Britto. Then, as her angry questioning could be heard, mingled with the growls of a deeper voice, Gata broke into delighted tittering.

VIII

THE morning heat wore past. Noon burned itself out. Afternoon went on a breeze that rippled the misty level of the sea; but not until the shadows of the palms before Nanoh's hut swerved to eastward, and grew long, did Gata rise from her mat.

She bathed, supped, took time for a cigarette, then once more dressed herself with care. Day had now given place to night, but with scarcely any lessening of light, only the changing of it from gold to silver.

Watching from the seaward edge of the grove, Gata waited until Britto left his store and made down to where several canoes were hauled up on the beach. Then she took herself quickly to his place. She was boldly wearing, draped about her slender shoulders, the stolen mantle of vivid hue.

A group of native women and children were lounging on the wide front steps. Others were in the shadowy veranda, where the ends of their cigars and cigarettes made glowing spots. Chin up, and skirt swishing, Gata made her way proudly through the group, amid a silence that was almost portentous.

The big oil lamp that hung in the center of the store was burning. Under it, on a bench, were seated Banna, Trupp's cook, and Kuruh, from the church house. Against the counter, examining some fish lines which Eleenay was displaying, were two great lumps of native girls, noisily picking and comparing.

Her eyes half closed, as if seeing no one, Gata loafed her way in. Faced with the white girl, the wife of Britto straightened as if struck, and threw up her disheveled head like a cockatoo rising for combat.

Gata was standing sidewise, a dimpled elbow planted among the coiled lines.

"Some of those candy," she instructed; "those red kin'."

Without looking at the woman between her and the shelves, she gave a languid nod to point out the particular jar.

Eleenay did not move. Though the light from the hanging lamp was dim, she had not failed to catch sight of that gay square of silk about the girl's shoulders. She seemed to be all eyes. Her mouth was agape.

Gata played her rôle as customer with a high hand. With a small coin, impatiently she tapped the counter.

"Come long!" she drawled insolently. Sensing conflict, the loungers on porch and steps either had come inside the store, or were watching what was going forward through the raised kajangs. All were breathlessly quiet.

Eleenay was done with her staring at the shawl. She whirled, looked up at the pile of mantles on the shelf, noted that only two remained, gasped, turned back to the sales book on the counter, and ran a grimy finger down the list for the day.

Gata knit her brows in annoyance, and once more rapped smartly with the coin.

"Oh, say now!" she expostulated.
"Come, chase yourself for those candy.
Horry! I don' stan' here all nigh'!"

With all the blood gone from it in anger, the face of the native woman had a green-

ish tinge.

"How you get those shawl?" she demanded, speaking low and evenly, but with a terrible intensity.

A hint of a smile parted Gata's scarlet

lips.

"I gathers him," she answered easily,

" righ' here."

Eleenay leaned far forward, so that her breath moved the tiny curls on Gata's white forehead.

"You buy tha' shawl?" she asked.

Gata did not answer at once, but her teeth showed in a tantalizing smile, and she gave a toss of her crowned head.

"No," she finally replied. "I don' haf

for buy."

"A-a-a-ah!" Again that tousled head was up. Two thin, hard fists were resting on the counter, where they trembled at the end of shaking brown arms. "You don' buy. So! Hees give it, eh?"

" Tha's righ'."

For an instant the air was electric with silence. Then, in overwhelming rage and torment, Eleenay made a sound like some savage animal. Her outcry set all the wrapper-clad figures in the room to moving. Heads turned this way and that. Only Gata did not stir.

"You unnerstan' how I says red candy?" she inquired. "Say, Eleenay, if you don' eat so moch op-i-um, you got more sense!"

That stung. Eleenay's thin features were working, her lips trembling, her small, broken, black teeth chattering. She pronounced an insulting epithet. Gata, enjoying the effect she had created, received it calmly.

"Not my blame," she argued indifferently, "if you all tam' quarrel with Arnol', so hees not crazy 'bout you. Also your neck, shees all bones and skins. You is natif Malay—you is Chino, an' you got looks like lady mawnkey!"

" Arnol' !"

The summons was a shriek. As if no longer able to endure the sight of her tormentor, Eleenay turned and fled along the counter. Her eye had caught a movement beyond the hanging matting. She pushed through it, panting and choking, and came into collision with Britto, his sleek head tipped forward in an attitude of listening.

He was thrown back a step. The matting fell together, and the two were alone in the dark. Those in the trade room heard no accusation, no defense—only a repetition of that wild, animal-like cry, a shuffling, a coughing, and then—a fall.

A moment of quiet, while the women kept their look on the parting between the mats. Gata interrupted the silence with a

peal of laughter.

"Tha' ri', Arnol'!" she commended. "If shees don' be good, you mus' knock her

down!"

It was then that Eleenay came stealing out. Again her teeth were clenched. Her face seemed to be cut out of green stone; but her eyes were alive, and burned like the eyes of a madwoman.

Gata frowned.

"Don' he lick you?" she demanded.

As Eleenay moved forward among the crowding and whispering women, with a swift step Gata went to part the heavy curtains. Britto's slight figure was stretched on the bamboo floor, his arms spread wide. The soft straw hat that had fallen from his head lay at one side. The ends of his flowing tie half covered his scarred face. Upright in his breast, and showing clearly against his white silk shirt, was the handle of a knife.

Gata pursed her red lips in a long-drawn whistle. Her black eyes were dancing. This was more than she had hoped for! Beyond the possibility of a doubt, Arnold Britto was forever out of the way.

Eleenay had turned about, fingering the loose wisps of her hair, absent-mindedly arranging them, and watching the girl. She seemed strangely cool, and a queer smile was twitching her betel-reddened lips. Lifting an arm, she pointed a finger at Gata.

"Nex', you," she said quietly.

Gata let the matting swing back into place. With one sidewise dart she could have passed the dead body and escaped by the rear door; but, as Mr. Langdon had granted, she was not wanting in spirit, and she was not to be threatened or intimidated before a roomful of natives.

There were ten feet or so between her and Eleenay. Indolently, with her head high and her eyes defiant, she went swaying up to the other woman.

"W'at you mean?" she demanded. Then, lifting her own arm, so that a white hand almost touched Eleenay's face: "See my han'!" she ordered. "Look! Shees w'ite!"

"N-n-n-n!" breathed the other, shifting from foot to foot.

In the gathering about and behind her there came a like shifting, and a murmuring. In insulting one, Gata had insulted all.

"I wite, also," Gata went on. "I don' low natif womans for stan' befront me!"

Whereupon, using both fists, she gave Eleenay a shove.

The next instant a dozen women hurled themselves upon her, tearing, striking, scratching, shrieking, while she fought back, kicked as well as her tight skirt would allow, and shrieked loudest of all. The dress of black satin, which she had worn before them for so long in hateful impudence, was ripped from her body. As they closed in and clutched her, her strength was no match for theirs, and she went down.

Many arms and knees crushed her against the bamboo floor, so that the breath was knocked out of her. Eleenay, rescuing the shawl from the trampling, shouted an order. A score of voices took it up. The hammock made out of bright cords was taken from its nail and passed through the crowd to where the victim lay. There, many hands helping, it was straightened out and spread upon her. Then, as a fish is wrapped in a leaf, she was trussed in the net of coarse strands.

The Butterfly of Leepoohu was in a chrysalis!

IX

At Trupp's, Leonie Vannier had heard the shouting and the dull pounding of feet. Now she was out on the front veranda beside her employer.

"What's that noise over at Britto's?" she asked anxiously. "Listen, Mr. Trupp! Something's happening."

The trader sat up and stared across the quarter of a mile of moonlit sand.

"Guess some mischief's busted loose," he admitted.

They listened again, hearing the shrill babble of voices and the sound of a struggle.

"It's more than just Britto and his wife," declared Leonie. "Do you think I ought to run over and see if there's anything I can do?"

"No," Trupp answered promptly. "I don't. Keep out of it, Leonie! You know, I been saying there'd be bad trouble over yonder some fine day. Britto sells too much gin and too many of those little black pellets!"

Beside the hammock-wound captive, the self-made widow was standing. The bright silk shawl was bound about Eleenay's head, and her look was wildly triumphant.

"Wite womans, shees no good for us!" she cried. "No good!"

"Ai! Ai! Ai!" responded a chorus that was like one great voice.

Through the rough cords that crisscrossed her face, Gata glared up at her enemy. There was no fear in her eyes, and no pleading—only defiance.

"Wites is too good for you!" she panted. In derision, she sought to thrust out her red tongue through the meshes over her mouth.

Eleenay made no retort. She gave more orders, and several of the younger women hurried out of the store. While they were gone, she went whispering among the others, and to what she said they returned eager agreement.

"You j'alous 'cause I w'ite!" taunted Gata. "You j'alous 'cause I beautiful! Good! Good! I w'ite! I beautiful! All res' natifs! Black skins! Ugly! Betel mouths!" Then, to show her utter disgust of them: "Ugh! Bah! Lah!"

Back were streaming those who had been sent on errands. Two brought the length of hollow wood which for so many years had called the settlement to worship in the white man's church. Others bore aloft unlighted torches, made out of tarred rope thrust into lengths of bamboo. Kuruh, the pockmarked and bald, was carrying a long, heavy pole.

Eleenay waved the pole forward. Her agate eyes were burning with a fierce joy. She showed all her stained and broken teeth in a smile.

"Meouw! Meouw!" Gata taunted, and spat like a cat.

The pole came thrusting through the crowd. It was lowered till it hung a foot

or more above the prostrate girl. To it, at either end, were tied some lengths of rope that went under Gata and around her.

Next, the whole crowd of women got in motion. Sacks were caught up and half filled with tins from the trader's shelves. Matches were added to the food supply. The single lantern and all the torches were lighted. Lastly, the pole was lifted to the shoulders of four women, with Gata swinging beneath it.

"Ai!" she mocked. "You carries me! Tha's wha' you mus' do! I w'ite girl! You all servan's! So you don' le' me walk.

Tha's nice!"

Eleenay leading, the start of the four bearers was made. Out of the trade room they went, and down the front steps, against which Gata's low-swinging body was bumped heavily once or twice, though proudly she gave no sign of pain. Pushing, crowding, shouting like mad, the rabble of women streamed after, emptying the building of all save the dead.

Not even a thought was given to Trupp, the white man who was so fat that his small ankles could scarcely do more than uphold his great weight. Around the corner flared the torches, useless here, under the bright After them, between two strong

girls, came the wooden drum.

To make the carriers' task more difficult, Gata now began to wriggle and throw herself about; and to let those at Trupp's know that she was in a serious predicament, she fell to shouting:

"Trupp! Trupp! Tru-u-upp!"

Her cry was muffled, but he heard the

"What d'you suppose they're up to over there?" he asked Leonie, trying to hide the excitement in his voice.

"That's Gata's voice!" exclaimed the "Oh, I'm sure of it! She wants girl. help!"

As if about to go toward the torches and the crowd, she ran down the steps.

" Here!" Trupp's voice was harsh. "Don't you leave this house! If that little devil's got herself into a scrape, she can just get herself out again!"

Leonie had halted.

"They're going into the grove," she said.

"All right! The farther they go, the better it suits me. Well, I've been expecting this. Told the padre only yesterday that the women 'd pull something!'

The drum began to beat-roo-oo-oom, roo-oo-oom, roo-oo-oom. Its hollow voice summoned the women of the settlement who were not already of the mob, along with boys, growing girls, and little ones, the last astride their mother's hips. Questions and explanations were shouted. Save for a dozen very old men and women, every native in the settlement had joined the throng.

At the upper edge of the grove a short halt was made. The four bearers were relieved by another four. The food sacks and the babies were put down for a moment, while - following the example of Eleenay—the women gathered the bottoms of their calico wrappers about their waists, so that their limbs might be free. Then once more all moved on, turning left into

the Spirit Path.

The torches led, for the fragrant, fernhung trail was black. After them pressed Eleenay, with many a pleased look backward to where, at her heels, was Gata, swinging rhythmically, like a tigress caught in a net. The drum followed the burden, and behind it came a long line of women, chanting in time to the drumbeat.

The two at Trupp's did not have to be told that the village was practically swept As the beating and the singing grew steadily farther and farther away in the gorge, a weird stillness settled over huts and grove. Then, with a lighted lantern wrapped in a square of sacking, Leonie Vannier crossed the open space between

When she reached Britto's front veranda, she halted to listen. Hearing no sound, she crept around to the shadows in the rear, stole across the rear veranda, listened again, uncovered her lantern at a kajang, pushed it before her across the window sill, and made out, in the darkness, the shape lying upon the floor. She gasped in terror, and fled homeward.

"They've killed him!" she told Trupp. " Poor Britto's lying in there on his back

-stabbed!"

the two stores.

He took her lantern and shook it out in his fat hands.

"This time," he said grimly, "Eleenay cut deep. Well, well, well!"

"That's why they've gone!"

"They figure to make the cutter people hunt 'em in the jungle. Meanwhile Eleenay'll prob'ly get away to some other island.

"But Gata-what's she got to do with this trouble? Oh, Mr. Trupp, what can we do to help her?"

X

Bruised and battered, her soft back scraped by the stumps and hummocks that stood here and there in the middle of the way, and at frequent intervals let down suddenly, without warning, on any kind of a resting place, Gata had ceased to throw herself about, since this only added to her misery. Nevertheless, whenever there was a halt, and the singing and drumming ceased, she continued to make herself heard, abusing her captors, threatening them, scolding and insulting.

"Wite lady don' walk up hills," she bragged through the mesh. "Shees make

natif sweat!"

"But thees w'ite woman, shees butterfly-beau-uti-ful butterfly!" replied Eleenay. "Only jus' now shees can' use wing! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" And to the bobbing heads below her: "All mans crazy bout her! Now all womans got her! Come on! Gar, we haf fun!"

Up and up wound the procession, the padding of many feet keeping time to the beat of the cylinder which had suddenly gone savage. Roo-oo-oom, 100-00-00m, roo-oo-oom - its hollow notes, sounding from the jungle fastness, were strange, wild,

ominous, and malign.

At long intervals the front of the line came into the full moonlight, where, high above a noisy, tumbling stream, the path issued from beneath its canopy of closewoven boughs and vines and curved out upon some promontory of black lava rock. Here, in the night wind that brushed the mountain, the fire of the torches flared and flowed, till once more the trail plunged into the inky forest.

Hour after hour went by, while the moon swam the whole width of the sky. Finally, in the early hours of the morning, while the chill of night was still in the air, the gorge became shallow, the stream showed itself as a mere trickle of white, and the path suddenly veered to an open glade,

gently hollowed.

Here bubbled forth the spring which was the beginning of the stream. About it was a thick carpet made of creeping plants, which, running in all directions, were braided together inextricably. carpet did not follow the contours of the

ground, but stretched above them, so that it was taut and springy.

"Hai!" shouted Eleenay.

She threw up a thin arm, and stepped aside. The head of the column halted, and the hammock-wound burden was let drop. The hollow cylinder ceased its beat, and the torches were inverted and extinguished against the dew-spangled green underfoot.

Hands on hips, Eleenay stood a little in advance of the torchbearers, waiting for the remainder of the company to come up. This was a changed Eleenay. From under the folds of the silk shawl that hid her domed forehead showed wet wisps of her dark hair, lying upon her brows in little curls. Somewhere on the winding trail she had shed her soiled calico wrapper, that symbol of the white man's moral dictation. She was no longer the native drudge.

Along with the ugly garment, too, the years had fallen from her. Naked, save for a length of cloth tied close about her body at the hips, she looked a girl.

Breathing hard with their climb, laughing, exclaiming, woman by woman, the procession gained the glade. Here they gathered behind their leader, and to either side of her. When the last straggler had come up, Eleenay gave another order:

" Res'!"

With scarcely a glance at the motionless body lying beside the pole, the women sat, ridding themselves of their loads, drawing the children down beside them. who had babies nursed them, or cradled them tenderly, quieting them to sleep.

Westward, the moon had dropped below the tree tops, which made a feathery dado upon the still bright sky. Straight below, the darkness which filled the gorge was like a gigantic pyramid cut out of solid ebony. Beyond the base of that pyramid, gleaming spots marked areas bare of trees and shrubs. Still farther down lay the ocean, wearing a silver glaze.

As Eleenay looked down upon the scene, she paced in front of the seated throngto and fro, to and fro, her step catlike. Suddenly, as if worked to a pitch, and once more with that cry like an animal's, she sprang to where Gata lay, and tore at the

knots in the binding ropes.

Other hands joined in the untying, and Gata was tumbled out of the hammock. Upon her face, arms, and body were many short, angry red lines, forming diamond patterns, where the strands had pressed

into the soft flesh. In the tangle of wavy black hair that came down to the lovely arch of her brows there hung what was left of her crown of scarlet hibiscus. The flow-

ers were broken and discolored.

When she was free, she made no attempt to stand, but extended her body languidly, almost indifferently, letting it sag into the green carpet. Then, her clasped hands under her head, she glanced up at Eleenay, who was again pacing, and a smile curved her mouth.

"Ya-a-a-ah!" she taunted. "You t'inks you smarts! But w'ite frien's to me—Trupp, Leonie, Messer Phalps—fin' out w'at happens! Pretty soon, hees all come! An' you see! Ha-a! Hees plenty fix all

you trash!"

A toss of the head had greeted each name. Eleenay halted, laughing shrilly.

"Trupp! Hees fat hog! Hees can' come up! Phalps don' walk back along beach if Kuruh's kids don' fetch! An' Leonie, shees hate you! Shees glad 'bout all!"

"You knifes your 'usban'," Gata continued smoothly. "For soch comes cutter

boats."

"Ya-a-a-ah!" retorted Eleenay. "S'pose cutter boats swim up to here? W'at tha' do for Britt'? Also, w'at tha' do for you? 'Cause, bes' t'ing of all, you soon finish!"

At that, from the seated throng there went up a joyous murmur of agreement. The next moment, at a sign from Eleenay, two or three young native women, wasting no gentleness on the task, snatched from under Gata's head the hands that were so hateful in their whiteness, and bound them together at the wrist. Next they tied her slim ankles with a rope, one end of which remained in the hold of a watchful woman.

At sight of this, once more Eleenay

broke out in laughter.

"Pig, shees on rope!" she told the others, and joined in their shouts of delight.

"Pig go snoot' from this side, from tha' side," retorted Gata sweetly, when the clamor had subsided. "Shees black pig—natif pig—mawnkey pig!"

Eleenay laughed harder than ever.

"Hai! Yai!" she sang. "One pig, shees gon' do few t'ings for oder pig — for beautiful pig — gran' butterflies pig!

Gata laughed up at her.

"Beeg han's!" she snorted. "Ole face!
Fuzz' hair! Skin of neck like fight cock!"

A loud booing went up. Voices broke out in praises of Eleenay, of her slender body, of her great eyes, of her cleverness—all to comfort any hurt given by the enemy. They bade her wait no longer, take no more abuse.

"Bes' t'ing," they urged, "do jus' now,

Eleenay! Fine tam' jus' now!"

Gata pretended not to hear. Letting her head tip backward, she lifted her face to the sky. In the high bowl of it, a light that was of the dawn was beginning to blot out the stars. Only a few could be seen—pale, as if fear-driven, clinging to the westward side of the bowl. As she watched them, she hummed the song which, on Sunday morning, had whetted the ire of Banna.

Both her indifference and the tune now added to the anger of the gathering. Some of the women laughed, but their laughter had in it a threat. Others called out words which hinted of what was soon to be. As for Eleenay, she was prepared to act. Having searched all the upraised faces before her, from among the throng she selected four.

As she named them, and they sprang to their feet, they waited for no order, understanding what they were to fetch. Whooping, leaping, and cheered on by all the others, they left the gathering for the edge of the forest. Behind them, to light their work, followed another four, bearing lighted torches; and immediately there was much swishing of branches.

Next, Eleenay called out two other women. When they hurried to her, she took them aside, and for a long minute the three held a whispered conference—a conference with bursts of glee in which those still seated joined, as if what was being said was

no secret to them.

The whispering done, a fifth torch was lighted. Then, one following on the steps of the other, the two set off up the glade

and disappeared into the jungle.

As Eleenay resumed her pacing, once more the hollow cylinder began to beat, keeping time to her steps. A strange refrain rose on the clear morning air. The children were awake now, and to the voices of the women were added those of the little girls, high and piping, and the falsetto of the growing boys. The effect was weirdly mournful, savagely sinister.

Stirred by the melody and the drumming, gradually Eleenay became like a creature possessed. The dear hour when she could even her score had come. Her

song grew more shrill.

Catching fire from her frenzy, here and there in the crowd women rose, and, while continuing the chant, began to sway in unison. Presently all but those who held little ones were afoot and dancing in weaving circles.

The last star dimmed, the gray of the heavens turned to rose, the torches came streaming out of the forest. At once the dancing and the singing stopped. All eyes were turned to the eight young women who were advancing. They were not coming empty-handed; and at sight of what they brought there went up a great clamor of joy.

Gata understood what it was all about, but she did not deign to show the slightest curiosity or interest. However, for the first time she moved her tangled head to give a quick glance down the path up

which she had been borne.

A moment later, with a spring and a snarl, Eleenay was upon her. She seized the girl by a great handful of her soft, wavy

hair, and dragged her upright.

While she was held thus, Gata made no outcry. A woman was undoing the rope that secured her ankles—in order that she might be able to stand erect and receive what was to be measured out to her. What that was, she now knew for certain; for in the hands of several were long green bamboo sticks.

When the last knot was untied, Eleenay dragged her fingers free of the black hair. Then the two faced each other. The slender, brown body of the native woman was as taut as a bow. The almost nude figure of the white girl was taut, too, and her teeth were set to endure the agony of the

new-cut rods of punishment.

Her chin was up. As her hands were freed, she folded her arms upon a breast from which the last red mark had faded, leaving the flesh like unflawed marble. Her face was a marble mask. Only the velvety eyes told her feelings. Murder was in those eyes, and unbridled hate; indomitable pride, too, and cunning.

"Hai! Hai!" Eleenay seized several of the withes and sent them whistling through the air, to try their strength and weight, and to torture her helpless victim. "Hai! Shees fine wip! Fine! Ain' it so, Gata? Ha-a-a-a! You beautiful, you but-

terfly, you w'ite girl; but w'en I makes finish-"

Again the bamboos hissed. Gata took a deep breath. Now was the time for

"So-o?" she drawled. "You w'ips me, eh? All ri'! But one t'ing sure—if you w'ips me, never you knows w'at is ver' important."

Threats of white defenders and government cutters had not moved Eleenay. Now curiosity did. Down came the bamboos, to rest their green ends on the darker green of the vine matting.

"W'at I don' never knows?" she demanded sharply.

"'Bout Arnol'-bout those shawl."

" M-m-m-m!"

Eleenay considered, pursing her lips. Large in her was the desire to cut the white flesh that had been for so long hateful to her, the yearning to make her enemy scream with pain.

Hesitation was a partial victory. Gata

pressed her bargain.

"You don' w'ip me, I tall quick."

But the crowd did not wish to be cheated of seeing the loathed one beaten, her pride humbled, her beauty scored. It swayed forward, protesting:

"No, Eleenay! No! W'ip! W'ip!"
Plainly, Eleenay was hard tempted.
"I mus' fin' out," she declared, "all

w'at shees can tall."

Again the women expostulated, murmuring, groaning, tossing their arms in the air.

"W'ip!" they argued. "W'ip! W'ip!"

Eleenay grew impatient.

"W'at's matter 'bout that?" she demanded. "S'pose I don' w'ip—ain' we got awther fun?"

A chorus of agreement:

" Ai! Ai!"

She threw down the bamboos.

"Now!" she said to Gata. "Talk!"

"You don' w'ip? How I knows for sure? Always you tall lies."

"I don' w'ip," replied Eleenay stolidly.

"Go 'head!"

Gata was thinking fast. Those two women who had disappeared farther along the path, they had not come back. Where were they gone, and for what? Also, what was that "awther fun"?

The crowd was expectant, motionless, fairly breathless. Eleenay was so impa-

tient that she stamped.

"Go 'head!" she repeated peremptorily. Gata realized that there was no time for further bargaining. She must be contented with overcoming the present danger. She unfolded her arms and pointed an impressive finger.

"Sun'ay morning," she began, "Arnol' an' Trupp haf row. Arnol' say Trupp sell gin, an' Trupp say how Arnol' smoke opium, an' do nawt'ing, only all tam' look affer

girls."

"Ai-i-i!" assented Eleenay fiercely. "I glad I kill! Always I work, work, work! Always hees don' work! An' hees like girl, all ri'! Now if hees like, he haf girl!"

A howl of delight greeted the declaration. Then Gata went on with her story. Having found it easy, with her more adroit brain, to sway the other woman, now she

spoke with full confidence.

"You yall for Arnol'—hees go—I go. Sun'ay ni', Trupp spik to me 'bout that row. 'Gata,' hees say, 'Arnol' trades me shawl. You put tha' shawl on, an' go for buy candy. Eleenay, shees j'alous, an' shees fool. Shees see tha' shawl, an' shees make row with Arnol', an' shees make him go 'way from Leepoohu.'"

" A-a-a-ah!"

A murmur ran through the whole of the mob. Eleenay, her anger suddenly mounting against the new enemy, churned the air with her bony arms.

"Pig! Dog! Shark! Snak'!"

Smoothly, easily, Gata continued her

lying.

"Ai, Trupp say I do it. How I t'ink bout tha' if hees don' tall me? Hees wan' for drive 'way your store."

Eleenay appealed to the women:

"Don' you see? Don' you see? All wite mans, hees bad!"

"Ai! Ai!" they answered.

Eleenay stretched out her arm. Pointed downward at the beach, it was like an arrow, ready to dart.

"Ol' fat pig! Out hees go-out!"

"Out! We halp!" It was Banna who spoke, voicing support of Eleenay's proposal. Using her big shoulders, the woman pushed her way to where the storm of anger centered. "Eleenay! We go back!"

They were rested, and this new promise of excitement drove away any thought of food. Again the wooden drum began to beat — r-r-r-room, r-r-r-room! And again arose that low, weird, menacing chant.

"Come!" Eleenay shouted. "Come!" A brown foot reached behind Gata's

slender ankles, hooked about them, and gave a sudden jerk. She sat down as neatly and suddenly as if worked by a spring. Next, brown hands shoved at her, flattening her upon the green-matted ground, and nimble fingers once more bound her hand

and foot.

Roo-oo-oom, roo-oo-oom, roo-oo-oom! With Eleenay leading, a long, twisting, dancing line began the return to the settlement. Behind stayed the children, the larger ones to care for the smallest. Behind, also, stayed Banna and Kuruh. These two Gata could neither play with nor cajole. They sat on one side of her, holding to the end of her foot rope.

XI

It was Leonie Vannier who, watching mountainward from the end of Trupp's veranda, heard the resumption of the singing and the drumming, and realized that it was steadily nearing.

".They're on their way down!" she told

her employer.

He was on his cane lounge, but he hauled himself to his feet, waddled to join her, and stood, stilling his hard breathing while he listened.

"Yes, they're on their way down," he

admitted.

She stared at him.

"But you think it 'll be all right, don't you?" she asked. "They'll go to their houses, and—"

"They will not!" he snapped out. "If they intended to settle down, they wouldn't be carrying on like that. No, ma'am! I know natives a lot better 'n you do, Leonie. That bunch o' women mean mischief, I tell you!"

"What kind of mischief? Not to us,

do you think?"

Beads of anxiety were standing out on

Trupp's big forehead.

"No telling what they'll do," he asserted. Then, facing seaward: "Thunder, I wish a schooner would show up, or Langdon would come! He could handle 'em. Pah, pah, pah!"

"But why should any of them want to hurt me?" she argued. "I've never had a word with any native on this island. I've treated them the best I knew how."

"That 'll do you a lot o' good!" Trupp retorted ironically. His face was puckered with worry, and he was polishing the top of his yellow head. "There's been a killing, Leonie—prob'ly two. That 'll give 'em an appetite for more."

"I'm not afraid."

1 23

a's

nd

at-

g.

n-

be

be

11

1e

e-se

He lifted a hand authoritively.

"Just the same, I'm not going to leave you here. They might give you some rough handling, and I'd have to shoot into the crowd. I tell you, they're not done yet. They've been up that tabu trail. What if they ain't coming back alone?"

That was a new consideration. As he went rolling toward the door leading into the trade room, she followed, with a glance toward the grove that was full of dread.

"What had we better do?"

"Get some grub together. We'll go up into the jungle. Fetch my rifle and belt."

He crossed the store to a pile of pails and kitchen utensils, cut the rope that held these together, threw them to right and left with much rattling and banging, took a package from the middle of the pile, stuffed it into a pocket, and received the gun and belt from her hands.

"You start ahead," she urged. "Go up toward the Pool Path. I'll catch you."

Hat on head, weapon over a shoulder, he went lumbering away through the early morning sun. A moment later Leonie followed, a filled basket on one arm.

They passed through the grove and into a clump of flowering wattles that stood out from the edge of the jungle. This was more walking than Trupp had done in years, and he would go no farther. Breathing asthmatically, he knelt while he wiped away the sweat of his unaccustomed exertions. Leonie stood a little in advance of him, peering out and listening. Now faint, now full and resounding, came the women's chorus and the drumming through the throat of the other gorge.

"I didn't mind their funny business when they were going away," he told her between his gasps; "but now I wish we was out a few miles in a canoe. Pah, pah,

She shook her head.

"You forget about Mr. Phelps," she reminded. "We can't go without him if this is an anti-white uprising."

He gave a sardonic chuckle.

"One thing certain—it's an anti-Gata uprising!"

She lifted a warning finger. Two or three bent old figures were issuing from near-by huts. Trupp swayed forward to his hands to get a look at them. When he straightened, his eyes were rolling.

"They savvy what's doing!" he told her.
"It's the grannies that hate us the worst.
Leonie, this is going to be the last of the

whites on Leepoohu!"

The returning women were near now, for the descent had been as easy as it was joyous. Like an avalanche, they had gathered speed with every rod. The head of the column, led by a small, capering figure that was Eleenay, soon broke into sight among the slender boles of the coconuts.

"Ah, look at them!" Leonie whispered.

"Oh, Mr. Trupp, look!"

Were these the native women she had known in the store and about the village—these wild creatures, almost naked, who, not in a serpentine line now, but in a noisy, screaming horde, were leaping and frolicking down the slope?

"They're all brown. Gata isn't with

them!"

The trader was standing beside her.

"Devils!" he puffed. "Jungle harpies! Great Scott, if only the padre could see his congregation now!"

It was evident that they had not come on a peaceful mission; and what their purpose was, Leonie instantly divined.

"Oh, Mr. Trupp, they're going to do something awful! Don't look, Mr. Trupp! They've got their torches lighted, and—"

He seized her wrist to steady himself. "They're making for my store!"

"Ai! Yai, yai, yai!"

With the pounding of their feet, and the beat of the drum, the ground seemed fairly to shake.

"They'll kill us if they find us! Leonie, we better move back!"

The mob had stopped short, and was silent. A few feet in front of it, her hands on her hips, and her shawl-wound head held high, Eleenay was standing.

"Trupp!" she called. "Fat pig! Eleenay Britt' talk to you! I knows all trouble w'at you an' Gata makes for me! Well,

all ri'! Now I shows!"

There was another moment of quiet, while the woman waited for a reply. Then the brown statue before them half turned.

"No more w'ites!" she cried.

It was like a battle cry.

"No more w'ites!" shrieked a chorus.

The next moment the drum was thrown down; and amid a furious scrambling and

yelling, the women entered the store, through kajangs as well as doors, to loot what they liked. Only the torchbearers were left outside. At a sign from Eleenay, these now leaped forward, and, shouting, lifted their torches and set the ends of them against the thatch.

A burst of flame as the tinder-dry palm fiber caught. With a cry of warning, the four carriers of fire stepped back. Answering cries sounded from within. Over the heads of the looters the sudden roar of the conflagration was like the bellowing of some live and suffering thing. The whole of the roof had instantly become a seething mass of red tongues.

At the sight, up in the clump of wattles, Trupp gave a great gasping "Pah!" as if all the breath had suddenly been stricken out of him.

Now the mob came tumbling through the doors and window openings of the store, so fast that some were forced to leave behind the armfuls of food and clothing they had taken from the shelves. The bamboo rafters were ablaze, and exploding with a steady rattling that was like musketry. The walls were catching, too. Another minute, and the building was a pyre.

Then, at a shouted order from Eleenay, the torchbearers faced about, and, led by the drum, started across the open space between the two stores. The women followed, laughing and shouting hilariously.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" Leonie whispered.
"They're going the other way! They're not going to hunt us!"

"Let 'em dare!" Trupp answered through his teeth. "I'll shoot 'em the same as I'd shoot snipe!"

The work of the mob was only just begun. Once more the battle slogan was going up:

"No more wites! No more wites!"

The four with the torches were heading for the green garden out of which rose a white steeple. Leonie understood.

"Oh, not the church, Mr. Trupp!" she cried imploringly. "Oh, you don't think they'd dare to burn the church!"

She gave a sudden forward start, as if about to leave their place of concealment.

"Keep still!" Trupp's yellow eyes glared up at her. "Do you want us to be torn to bits? Here I am, laying low and letting 'em burn me out rather than expose you to danger!"

She scarcely heard him. She was trem-

bling with anger so violently that she was setting the acacias to trembling with her.

"You've got a rifle!" she told him.
"Let's go after that crowd, and tell them
to leave the church alone! Oh, I can't
stand it if the church goes! It 'll kill Mr.
Langdon! It 'll break his heart!"

Even as she spoke, the women were about the porch of the small white building, and the torches were being applied. Built of wood, and dried by hundreds of grilling suns, the church lighted as if soaked with oil. Adding its roar and crackle to that of Trupp's place, where the exploding of cartridges was mingling with the sound of bursting bamboo, the little New England meetinghouse in that South Sea garden rapidly turned from white to scarlet.

"Leepoohu's going back to the jungle," Trupp told the girl who was weeping beside him. "But don't feel too bad about this. The padre won't be surprised. It's exactly what he's been expecting."

"He worked so hard to get it up!" Leonie sobbed.

"It 'll bring him flying," Trupp assured her. "He'll see the smoke, and Phelps 'll see it. We won't be alone long. So, now, quiet down. I'm the one that ought to cry, Leonie. I ain't got a thing left but a little bunch of kale."

"No more wites! No more wites!"
Having set the tiny parsonage ablaze,
the women were crowding toward the Britto store.

"Now we're going to have a funeral pyre!" Trupp exclaimed. "Arnold 'll go with his place, and the cutter people won't be able to tell how he was done for. They burned me out because I was white, but they'll set the torch over there to wipe away every trace of the murder. And the padre thought he had that whole bunch converted!"

Through the tall trunks of the heavy-topped coconuts they saw the thing done. In what seemed less than half a minute, Britto's store was a single giant flame, while around it raced and screamed and danced the women, celebrating the work of destruction. Soon the din on Leepoohu beach was deafening—the roar of the fires, the pounding of the drum, the screeching of the rioters, the wild chanting, and presently a terrific series of explosions.

"Arnold had more ammunition in stock than me," observed Trupp.

Here, there, and everywhere was the

small brown figure of Eleenay, going like

a mad thing.

vas

er.

m.

em

n't

Ir.

re

dd.

of

ed

to

ıg

d

d

n

"Why can't we ask her to come up this "Then we way?" Leonie demanded. might be able to get hold of her, and keep her as a hostage until the others brought us Gata."

"Now listen!" Trupp returned firmly. "That bunch has had Gata for several They don't sit around and talk things overmuch, do they? You've had a chance to understand that. Well, whatever they set out to do to Gata, it's already been done."

"You don't think they've killed her?" "It's prob'ly the kindest thing they've

done to her."

"What do you mean?" asked Leonie,

her gray eyes wide with horror.

"That lot o' women down there"-Trupp gave a forward bend of his thick neck-" can think up more terrible things to do to a person than their men could. They've prob'ly treated her something awful, Leonie."

"Oh, poor Gata!"

The women were starting away again, up through the coconut grove. Bundled on their backs, or slung over their shoulders, they carried what Trupp's place had yielded. Though the drum was beating, the mob was quieter now. Moving with it went the old crones, bent and slow-footed.

"Do you think Eleenay'll tell them to burn their own huts?" Leonie asked.

Trupp shook his head.

"No. The old folks are scattering to go home. They can't climb; so the houses will be left for them. Oh, Christopher, I'm glad they're on their way!"

"Why can't I follow them?" Leonie pleaded. "They're acting like their usual selves. I don't believe they'd hurt me."

"Don't be crazy!" he returned. know how Gata's always treated themlike dirt under her feet. Well, they've held it against her for years. Now, after they've had her a whole night, what do you think you could do for her?"

XII

BUT Gata was still very much alive, and in excellent spirits. Just awakened from a sound sleep by some children who had come to play about her, she was sitting up to look down at the smoke pillars rising above jungle and grove. She guessed that both Trupp's store and Britto's were burning; and she realized that now the island offered to the young stranger the opening she desired for him. At the thought, she gave vent to a burst of joyous laughter.

Kuruh and Banna, puzzled and troubled, stared at her and scowled, then pushed at her roughly, forcing her to lie back again in the full glare of the sun. The heat brought her discomfort; but her chief concern was for her complexion. To protect it, she shook the heavy veil of her hair

about her face.

Eleenay and her regiment were making slow work of that second climb up the Spirit Path. At one point above the "dead line," where the stream that came splashing down the gorge widened into a broad, shallow, green-reflecting pool, the women halted and bathed. Then some of the food packages were opened; and while they rested and talked, they munched biscuits baked in England and crunched candies from factories in the United States.

Their hunger satisfied, with Eleenay and another standing guard a little way down the trail, they first smoked, then slept.

As for Trupp and Leonie Vannier, having left the clump of wattles, they were now on high ground, from which could be seen a wide expanse of sea. There the trader had sunk down with harsh gasps of breathlessness, while the girl had hastened up the Pool Path to fetch drinking water.

When they had eaten and drunk, Leonie went aside a rod or two, and yielded to the exhaustion which had succeeded excitement, anger, and grief. Trupp did not sleep. His back against a moss-covered rock, his cartridge belt pushed high up under his arms, so that his pistols hung down in front, he was a comically warlike Buddha. In his yellow-gray eyes was a strange light. Every little while he dampened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

Four smoldering heaps alone remained of the structures built by white men. Wandering about them, but keeping at a cautious distance, went the pigs of the village, grunting and snouting inquiringly, a dog or two coming on behind. None of the aged natives was in sight; so that, except for the animals, the settlement seemed utterly deserted. From the mountain gorges there came not a sound; and silence brooded over the whole of Leepoohu.

It was long past noon before the women resumed their climb, and the sky was flushed with the fires of sunset when Eleenay once more led them out upon the high swale where they had left their prisoner. Gata had heard them coming; but she lay

still, pretending to be asleep.

As the women rested again, they ate a second meal, dipping water from the spring, and scattering paper and empty tins about on the green slope, so that it looked like a place of innocent picknicking. Gata was hungry and thirsty, and her limbs were stiff from being tied; but she asked for no food, or water, or relief.

For their part, the natives ignored her. Their voices were subdued. Every little while some of them half turned their heads toward the higher ground behind.

Through the veil of her hair Gata watched them. A little wrinkle of wonder and anxiety formed between her brows.

They were wearing away the time—until when? Something still remained for the women to do. What was it?

The question was soon answered.

Suddenly, out of the jungle above the hollow, there came a woman's voice, and then another. At once the waiting throng rose, and a score began to call out, so that a babel of shouts filled the glade.

The two women who had been sent away

along the path were returning.

As the leading one of these two pressed through the wall of green and into sight, her body was bent forward with the weight she was carrying on her back. As she advanced at a half trot down the slope, her burden could not be made out clearly, for it was of a dull greenish hue that blended with the growth lifting behind; but as she met the crowd, and halted, she let down her load.

Then it was seen to be an old man—a hideous, decrepit old man, whose scaly and withered skin was stretched so loosely over his bones that everywhere it lay in folds. Sparse white hairs stuck up on his wizened head. A few other hairs showed on the bone that was his chin, on his ribbed breast, and down calves that resembled dead sticks. His toes splayed out like the toes of an animal.

"Toomar! Toomar!"

Arms in air, they greeted him. He showed his toothless gums at them, while his sunken eyes, little and black and cruel, eagerly glanced about, as if searching. In both of his long-nailed claws of hands he clutched several short lengths of bone and wood.

Suddenly he caught sight of that slight, white body couched on the green carpet of creepers. He gave a piping cry of delight, and extended his hands. Two of the women caught him up again and bore him forward. Then, with the women following and encircling him, he knelt beside Gata, peering down at her, and making little clicking noises with his tongue.

Pride had been stronger in her than curiosity, and she had not sat up to see who or what was coming; but now she turned her look upon the old man. Through the hair that screened her face she saw, first, the awful face and body of him; next, the

things he held in his hands.

With a hoarse cry and a summoning of all her strength, with her tied hands she pressed upon the matting, forcing herself to her pinioned feet. Then from her lips there came one terrible, piercing cry;

" Don' do tha'!"

It made the women shout with laughter; but it was a command, not an exclamation of fear. Gata did not argue or plead. She threw herself upon the old man, clutching his throat with her manacled hands, scratching at his eyes, pouring out upon him and all the others every sailor-learned phrase of abuse that she could remember.

Her struggles, fierce as they were, lasted only for a moment. Kuruh dragged at the rope, and Gata went down. As she fell, Banna's brown fist closed over the screaming mouth that was no longer scarlet, clamping it shut. Other hands seized the tied ones, so that Gata could not again attack.

She continued to threaten and revile them all, though her voice was muffled. About her pressed the women, peering and bantering. The old man, on his knees once more, was stooping to begin his task.

XIII

At the beach, Warren Phelps was standing in amazed concern beside the huge ash heap that had been Trupp's store. From where they were waiting for him, the trader and Leonie Vannier heard him call after the native boys, who, as if they understood the meaning of the fire, had taken to their heels and scurried out of sight.

Leonie crept from her place of concealment, and, gesturing a caution, brought Phelps hurrying to her, greatly concerned and full of questions. It was Trupp who furnished particulars of what had happened, while the younger man marveled and exclaimed.

" And don't think that bunch o' women was anything to sneeze at," the trader concluded. "Boy, overnight they slipped back

a hundred years!"

ht,

pet

le-

he

im

ng

ta,

le

u-

10

 \mathbf{b}

re

ne

of

lf

"This is the outbreak Mr. Langdon spoke about on Sunday," Phelps recalled. "It came sooner than even he expected. . Thank God that you're both alive and unhurt! But what about Gata Naro?"

"Yes, that's the question," Trupp reed. "As she went with 'em, yelling for help, there's no doubt they finished her. Thunder, I wouldn't trust 'em any more'n I would a drove of tigers!"

"Suppose I take the rifle and a couple

of pistols, and follow them?"

Trupp scowled.

"Follow 'em where?" he demanded harshly. "It would be just like hunting a needle in a haystack-in miles of jungle. No, the thing for us to do is get a big canoe launched. I'm not much at rowing, but I can steer, and we'll get away."

Leonie stared at him.

"Away?" she repeated, astonished. "Why, Mr. Trupp, you wouldn't really go before we do something about Gata?"

"Gata!" Trupp began with unconcealed disgust; but he quickly changed his tone. "You seem to forget, Leonie, that Gata's been here all her life. She's not like any of us. She knows the island-knows her way about-knows the women. Whatever they're up to, maybe she's leading, and-"

"She'd never be in on burning you out!" contradicted Leonie. "You know that

can't be true!"

"Well, anyhow, she likes a rumpus the way most kids like sugar candy. Prob'ly, if she was right here, and we talked go, she wouldn't budge. Honest, I think we might as well dust.

"No!" Leonie returned firmly.

Trupp shut his eyes and swung his great

"Now, my dear girl!" he chided gently. "I know why you say that. Your heart is sound, and so forth; but what do you owe Gata Naro?"

"I don't owe Gata Naro anything," she answered. "I don't think we have to owe somebody something in order to treat them

right. Do we?"

Phelps was seated on the moss-covered ground at her side. In quick appreciation he caught the girl's hand, drew it through

his arm, and held it there, his own hand closed over it.

"I'm not thinking of Gata as Gata," she went on earnestly. "I'm just remembering that if she were here with you two men, and I was somewhere up in the hills with those crazy native women-well, you see what I mean, don't you, Mr. Phelps? I'm trying to do as I'd be done by."

Phelps nodded.

"I understand," he said.
"Yes, yes," Trupp "Yes, began "Golden rule, and all that. Beautiful, too, and just like you, Leonie, 'cause you're a wonderful girl; but Gata's always been catty to you-never lost a chance to make fun of your age, and your looks, and your hands."

"I don't hold it against her," Leonie asserted. "She hasn't had the chance I've had. Because she's silly about herself, and lacks good manners, is that any excuse for my jumping into a boat and not caring what becomes of her? What I'm doing for Gata I'd do for any white girl—especially one with the brain of a ten-year-old child."

"You're certainly treating her great," Trupp acknowledged; but his big shoulders

heaved with amusement.

"I'm not foolish enough to think," Leonie went on, "that if Gata was here, and I was up in the hills, she'd stop on this beach long enough to light a cigarette; but, you see, I call myself civilized, and I've got to act civilized when I'm put to the What has all my singing in the church amounted to, and my church membership, if I can't think as much of Gata's life as of my own?"

Trupp's great paunches of cheeks lifted

in a wry smile.

"Leonie," he said, and there was a touch of both scorn and temper in his tone, " you're the stuff they used to make martyrs out of!"

Her cheeks suddenly flamed with scarlet. "There you're mistaken, Mr. Trupp. I'm the stuff that fighters are made out of. If they've hurt her, and I can get my hands on them-"

Phelps chuckled and patted her hand.

"Attaboy!" he applauded.

At that, her smile returned.

"' The ol'-maid girl, the beeg han's, shees gon' stay for help Gata," she added.

An anxious light had come into Trupp's little eyes. Now he swerved their glance to the face of the younger man.

"You vote to stay, too?" he asked.

"I'll stay until Miss Vannier's ready to go," Phelps returned quietly.

The trader laughed unpleasantly.

"I might have saved myself the trouble of putting the question," he observed sarcastically. "A chap of your age can't run off, can he, and leave a girl as pretty as Gata in the lurch?"

For a moment Phelps did not reply; then

he spoke decisively.

"I don't believe there's any use in our talking about this proposition any more," he declared.

Trupp grunted.

"Well, most men that get their eye on Gata fall for her right off the bat," he went "S'pose it's natural enough. men 'll save the handsome girl, and let the plain girl go hang; but that ain't the way I feel, no, sir-ee! I'm going to say flatly that Gata ain't the only girl to be considered. Here's Leonie Vannier, and she's more worth saving than-"

"Please!" Leonie interrupted. Phelps was keeping his temper.

"It isn't a question of choosing between the two young women, Mr. Trupp," he said quietly. "I hope we can save them both."

Trupp saw that he was on dangerous ground. To smooth matters, he reached to take Leonie's hand in earnest contrition.

"Oh, you're right, Leonie!" he vowed. "You're a brick! Your little finger's worth a dozen girls like Gata-that's all I'm trying to say."

By now the moon was rising over a slow and oily ocean. They made a frugal supper of biscuits and water. They had plenty of both, for Phelps had brought back a large part of the supplies taken the previous morning.

"Don't you think," he asked Trupp, "that I could go up the beach a little way

and try for some fish?"

"If we cooked fish," Trupp pointed out, "the women might see the smoke; and what I'd like to do is get by without a clash with 'em. I advise laying low here, and keeping a steady eye to seaward. If the padre comes, he's got to be warned; for if the women 're down here, they'll kill him as sure as you're born! No, Phelps, let's go without the fish, and take turns keeping watch."

But it was Leonie and Phelps who kept watch. Trupp, well shaded from the moon by a canopy of ferns, dozed comfortably, his wad of money tucked carefully under his great body, where his hand could in-

stantly find it.

While he slept, at times snoring so loudly that they were forced to throw bits of stalk and pods to check him, they were stationed where they could look out into the grove, and through it at the sea. They sat side by side, the brown head close to the fair. Once more Leonie's hand was drawn protectingly through Phelps's arm.

The cool, moonlit air seemed to beat with electricity. Every object was magnified and brought near, every sound amplified. The breaking of a twig, the babble of the water below the pool, the snouting and grunting of the pigs that were wandering about, all came clearly to the ears of the

fugitives.

They heard other sounds, too. Down the black gorge of the forbidden trail, again and again, there floated shrill laughter and

wrangle of gay voices.

"I hope the big chap didn't hurt you when he was talking about handsome girls and plain girls," Phelps whispered to Leonie. "You're not plain. Mr. Langdon expressed it just right when he said that you've got the kind of beauty that grows on a person. You have! What's more, I want you to know how much I admire the spirit you're showing in regard to Gata Naro. It's fine to meet a girl who isn't iealous!"

She laughed softly.

"Oh, don't praise me for that," she re-"If she and I were safe out of Leepoohu, I wouldn't change places with her for all the pearls in the South Seas. That sounds smug and self-satisfied, doesn't What I mean is this-with all her beauty, she hasn't any capacity for enjoying herself, except about what she puts on and the attention she gets. I think a woman's pathetic who's got nothing to make her happy but what she wears and how the men treat her."

" Exactly! She'll fade early. what she puts on won't make her look young, and she won't get the attention she's been used to; so she'll be a disgruntled

woman, and life "ll be a blank."

"She isn't looking beyond twenty-five. I'm not going to mind whether I'm twentyfive or forty-five. I shan't mind fading, because good looks and clothes haven't meant a great deal to me. The things I love most-books, and music, and people,

and travel—the older I get, the more I'll understand them and enjoy them. I hope to get steadily happier."

"Yes," he agreed; "and you'll make

everybody you meet happier!"

XIV

THE night went on in quiet brilliance, and the hot day that followed passed without incident. Then a second luminous night wore itself away, and another day dragged wearily by. Still no vessel of any kind came into view on the sea; neither was there any further sign of human life mountainward.

But on the evening of that second day—a moonless evening, for heavy clouds blanketed the whole of the sky—Gata Naro was unbound and set free. Famished for water, weak from want of food, first of all she crawled stiffly to the spring and drank; but, proud and defiant as ever, she would not taste the biscuit that was flung to her by Eleenay.

The torches were flaring once more. Their light fell upon the old man. His task done, he was sleeping, his half curled body looking horribly like a lizard. The crowd of women who squatted near him viewed his work and laughed inordinately.

Eleenay laughed loudest of all.

"Hai!" she cried, as daring and impudent as ever. All that she could claim in the world she had swept away with her own hand in a spasm of savage passion; but she showed no weakening, no trace of anxiety. "Now shees glad shees halp Trupp, eh?"

Gata's parched lips moved stiffly. "Betel mouths!" she flung back.

With a snarl of rage, the other woman caught her by an arm and hauled her to-

ward the path.

"Now, w'ite girl," Eleenay taunted, "you run 'way down to awther w'ites! Fly, beautiful butterfly! Ai, go by wing down along mountain!"

Gata understood that she was free. She reached and took the nearest torch from

its bearer.

"San' fly!" she mocked at Eleenay.

"Stick out bone for elbow! You feels ver' smart, eh? You t'inks you all finish now? All finish, an' nawt'ing more for happen? Ha-a-a-a! Wait! Not half shees done!"

Unsteadily she went forward from among the women, in her ears the clamor of their jubilating. She found the trail. She held the torch low, and a trifle behind her swaying body, so that the light was cast before her weak and stumbling feet, making their way plain. As she went, she kept murmuring to herself impatiently:

"I mus' horry! I mus'! Maybe Messer Phalps, he gone. No, he wouldn't do tha'. I fin' him! Sure t'ing, I fin' him!"

He was not gone, since Leonie Vannier still would not consent to leave Leepoohu until some word had come regarding Gatá's fate. As the utter darkness of the night had emboldened Trupp into leaving their hiding place, Phelps was on the beach, with Leonie near him, helping the trader to get away

After a considerable search—for Trupp allowed no match to be lighted—one of the larger outriggers had been located, turned over, furnished with biscuits, water, and oars, and launched—all without a word. Then, his trousers rolled up those wabbly columns that were his legs, the trader had half climbed, half flopped, into the boat, breathing his porpoise breath.

It was while Phelps, wading in his shoes, was freeing the boat's prow from its cleavage in the sand that Leonie heard, coming as if out of the grove, a sighing, then a soft rustling. She ran to the surf edge.

"Somebody's coming!" she told the two

men, whispering excitedly.

Trupp was now well afloat. Holding an oar so that he could shove farther out at any moment, he quieted his loud panting to listen.

Leonie was right. Down through the blackness, slowly, yet not stealthily, a soft step was approaching. All could hear the sound of it on the dry, yielding sand. They could hear, too, a labored breathing that was like the sucking in of a sobbing breath:

"Uh-huh! Uh-huh! Uh-huh!"

"Gata?" Leonie called out inquiringly. The steps stopped short. Then, in a weak, petulant voice, which seemed to be somewhat muffled, there was a question:

"Leonie, w'ere Messer Phalps?"

"Well, I'll be hanged!" came from Trupp.

But Leonie was climbing the slope like a deer.

"Where are you, Gata? Where?" And as that soft rustling guided the elder girl to the younger: "Oh, Gata, we're so glad you're all right! So glad, dear—so glad!" "All ri'," assented Gata, not halting to

greet the other; "only I like for see Messer Phalps."

"Warren!" Leonie summoned. "War-

ren, come here!"

At that, Gata again halted.

"Warren?" she repeated. "Tha's hees name? An' for w'y you call him Warren?"

Leonie scarcely heard.

"Oh, we've all been so terribly frightened about you!" she declared, her voice trembling with relief and joy. "Mr. Trupp, Gata's back!"

"Messer Phalps!" Gata was continuing on toward the water. "W'ere you is?"

"Here!" replied Phelps, hurrying toward her.

"Hello, kid!" rolled out of the blackness that lay over the water. "Welcome to our city!"

She did not answer Trupp's greeting. Once more, with that soft rustling, she was reaching out her hands in the dark to touch

Phelps.

"I back," she told him with a little choking laugh. "I back, an' I so happee for tha'! So happee! Leonie, s'pose you gives me some drink, eh? I got soch a beeg thirs'."

It was Phelps who whirled and raced back down the sand, charged into the gentle surf, and located Trupp's boat. All the while Leonie and Gata came on, Leonie guiding only, for Gata wanted no help.

"Have they been cruel to you?" asked the elder girl. "Oh, we were afraid they'd

hurt you!"

"W'at you talk, Leonie?" answered Gata, weary in body, but her spirit still unflagging. "Eleenay, shees don' dare do

nawt'ing to me-nawt'ing!"

When Phelps, returning, carefully guided to the girl's trembling hands the full can which she could not see, she drank long and deep, with a breath now and again between her swallowing.

"Ai, tha's fine," she told him gratefully; "but oh, Messer Phalps, more fine than water is for see you again! Moch more

fine!

"Poor little thing!" he murmured sympathetically. "Poor little thing! You're worn out, aren't you? Why don't you sit

down? Come-we'll all sit."

As she gave him back the tin container, she touched one of his hands, and clung to it. Then, as the three sat down, with Leonie Vannier on the side away from Phelps, Gata still kept hold of his hand, smoothing

it between both of her own, caressing it, laying it against her cheek.

Trupp called from seaward:

"Oh, for the love of Mike, don't do any sitting down! Get into this boat — the whole lot of you! Gata! We're just ready to start. Come on—we'll get away!"

"No!" cried Gata-a sharp, emphatic,

almost resentful refusal.

"What's the idea, kid?" Trupp's tone was full of anxious inquiry. "Let's get out of the place while the going's good!"

She was not listening.

"Messer Phalps," she said, speaking low, "Trupp, hees wan' go. All righ'—fine! But you don' wan' go 'way—no! You stays. For you thees the bes' place. I tall you w'y—now jus' one trader on Leepoohu, an' he is you. One store—tha's Messer Phalps's store!"

"Listen!" he urged imperatively. "This place isn't safe for you two girls. I want to get you out of danger. Mr. Trupp's right. Come! You've rested a little—"

right. Come! You've rested a little—"
"Ai-i-i-i!" It was a sorrowful, disappointed cry. "You like for go 'way—go 'way from Leepoohu?"

"Of course!"

A few feet off they heard a splashing and the sound of heavy breathing. As carefully as possible, Trupp was getting out of the canoe.

"But the store!" Gata persisted. "Don'

you wan' the store?"

"What would I want a store for?"

She gave a little sob.

"I don' unnerstan'," she faltered.
"Now shees all clear, an' you can have store, you like for go 'way. Never I expec' tha'!"

"Why, Gata," interposed Leonie gently, don't you know that we've been waiting

here just-"

Gata turned toward her.

"You shut!" she ordered rudely. Then, feeling about in the dark until she found the elder girl, and giving her a hard shove, she went on: 'You go by Trupp! I talks to Messer Phalps now. You go!"

"No!" Phelps protested. "Don't send

Leonie away."

"Leonie!" Again Gata had caught at the familiar use of a name. "You calls her tha'—so soon? W'y don' you calls me Gata if you calls her Leonie? Tall me!"

Trupp, having come out of the water, was standing only a few feet away. He was keeping very still, and listening.

"We haven't got time to talk about anything now," Phelps was saying. His tone was abrupt. He got up. "As Leonie has just tried to tell you, we've been waiting for you, because she wouldn't leave until she knew you were safe. She stayed to help you, and you must never forget what she's done for you. We both wanted her to go, but she wouldn't budge."

"Tha's nice." Gata assented. "Leonie. shees not good for look at, but shees fine woman. Pretty soon you teaches me for spik so gran' like Leonie. Only shees go now, along Trupp, an' we bees togather— jus' you an' me on Leepoohu!"

"Leonie's going," he told her; " and you must go, too. This isn't any place for a

white girl."

"Shees place for me," she declared. "Leepoohu, shees my home. I lofe her. I b'long here. Tha's w'y I clears all islan' for your store."

"You—you did what?" he asked.

"Britt', hees store gone. Trupp, hees store gone. I do all—all! Jus' for you." He drew away from her, staring at her,

though he could not see her.

"You did-you-" he stammered.

She lifted herself to her knees, and clung

harder than ever to his hand.

"Don' you b'lieve me?" she pleaded.
"I do all jus' 'cause I likes you—oh, so moch! So moch!" Then, as she heard him catch his breath: "You 'fraid I don' like you, eh? Ai, Messer Phalps, all mans, hees 'fraid I don' like him; an' I don' only you-you!"

"Listen!" he said to her firmly. "What did you mean when you said you did it all for me? Just what was it you did? Tell

me the truth!"

She gave a proud little chuckle. Then, still on her knees, and gazing up through the dark to where his face must be, she told her story-told it as she had told it to Eleenay, except that now she explained how the plan had been hers only, Trupp having no part in it.

"But I tall Eleenay how Trupp make me do it all, an' shees t'ink I tall trut', an'

tha's w'v shees burn Trupp up!" "Gata!" Leonie's voice was hollow with horror. "Oh, you couldn't have done that! You're delirious! You don't know what you're saying! Oh, Warren, we've got to humor her. She's sick!"

Trupp was silent, waiting for what was still to be told.

"Leonie's right." It was Phelps again. "You're sick—half crazy. You didn't do such a terrible thing!"

"Hai!" she exclaimed, impatient, disgusted. "W'at you care if Britt', hees die? W'at if Trupp burns up? I gets

them out, I gets you in!"

The next moment there came a scraping of the sand and a bellowing, as if an elephant were charging. Trupp was looming above the kneeling girl and roaring down at her.

"You little hellion!" he shouted. "You fiend! You she-devil! I've stood up for you, but Langdon's right! You're no good -rotten to the core—and you brag about it! You got Britto murdered-"

" Mr. Trupp!"

In the blackness, Leonie interposed herself between the raging trader and the girl he was upbraiding.

"Do you stand for things of this kind?"

he fairly screamed.

"She didn't do it, I tell you! Don't you know her? She's just bragging, Mr. Trupp! She-"

Gata would not allow the denial.

"I makes Messer Phalps beeg mans," she asserted. "I makes him top dog on Leepoohu."

"She's never had a chance!" Leonie went on passionately. "No mother, and no help-nobody but Mr. Langdon! Why, she's nothing but a baby!"

"That kind of talk makes me good and sick!" bawled Trupp. "Baby, nothing! Didn't you see Arnold Britto laying with a knife in him? Didn't-"

"But you likes for have Arnol' dead!" Gata broke in. "You says to me-" Trupp would not let her continue.

"You good-for-nothing little vixen!" he stormed. "I wish Eleenay'd treated you like I thought she would! You contemptible little-

"Here!" It was Leonie again, her curt voice fairly jabbing the dark. "You can just stop calling her names! You, and Mr. Britto, and all the rest of the men-you've praised her, and petted and spoiled her, and made her think that everything she did was just right, no matter how much she was hurting other people! When she was making fun of me, or abusing some of the native women, that was just cute, wasn't it?"

"Exactly!" Phelps joined in. haven't been here a week, but I know Leonie's right. Now your bull is gored! Well, it's chickens come home to roost!"

"Yes, it's his own fault," Leonie went on. "He's never once helped Mr. Langdon or me to make her behave herself."

Stung by the arguments against him, and all the more so because they were just,

Trupp turned upon Phelps.

"You're a nice one to be sticking in your lip!" he raged. "Why, you're responsible for this crazy business! She's gone and done the whole terrible thing for nobody but you!"

The younger man answered with furious

resentment.

"What are you talking about? How can I be responsible, when I've treated her politely and nothing more? Don't you come at me!"

"He knows you aren't to blame," in-

terposed Leonie.

"You ain't to blame, Phelps," Trupp confessed. "I'm going to be square enough to admit it. I have laughed at her tricks; but I was treating her like she was a white girl, and she ain't acted as if she was white. She's acted like a savage!"

"You've always made it clear that she was the kind of a girl you admired," resumed Leonie quietly. "Well, she's deliberately burned you out of everything you've got. I think you'd better get back into the boat. You can't help her, or even

have pity for her."

The trader spread out his arms in a helpless gesture which they could not see.

"I'll go," he declared. "No telling what kind of a yarn she's given them women about me. If they was to turn up, they might kill me!"

He heaved himself about and went scuffling heavily away, splashed through the gentle combers on his great feet, and grunted as he hauled himself back into the boat.

XV

And now, with Trupp gone, and the dark free of his hard breathing, both Leonie and

Phelps could hear a low weeping.

"Gata!" exclaimed the elder girl, quick to be tender and comforting. "It's all too bad, dear, but we know that you didn't realize what you were doing. The thing's done, and can't be undone. What we'd better do now is to get away."

A cry answered—a cry full of grief:

"Messer Phalps! You don' leave me?" Phelps answered as Leonie had done, re-

assuringly. Reaching down with his free hand, he rested it upon the head of the kneeling girl. Then, instantly and involuntarily, he started back.

"Gata!" he gasped. "What have they

done to your hair?"

"My—my hairs?" She tried to speak carelessly, but her voice shook. "Ha, for w'at shees do, I don' care, 'cause long tam' I tires 'bout so moch hairs. Eleenay, shees bob him."

Again his hand touched her head, and traveled over it carefully. He found no silky and abundant waves, but a short, stiff stubble, except in three places — directly on top and to either side—where the stubble was so long that it seemed to form tufts.

"Cut off — all your beautiful hair? She's hacked it? Oh, what a fiendish thing

o do!"

"Bob hairs, hees ver' stylish."

By this time a little gray had stolen into the blackness which shrouded the island; and Phelps and Leonie Vannier, peering down at the figure kneeling between them, could see that there was something strange about Gata's appearance. Both strained their eyes to make out what puzzled them, and murmured to each other, wondering and disturbed.

"Why are you hiding your face?" Phelps

asked again.

Gata gave a queer little laugh, nervous

and apologetic.

"My face, shees hurt some. Tha's 'cause Eleenay, shees got fing' nail like mawnkey."

There was a cloth swung across her features, this explaining the slight muffling of her speech. As he discovered it, Phelps jerked it away. Then, like one who questions the testimony of sight, he began whispering in horror:

"Oh, look! Leonie, see what they've done to her! Leonie, look at her face!"

Leonie looked, cried out in pity, and fell

to sobbing.

"Gata! Oh, you poor little thing! You poor little thing! Oh, how could they? They're devils! They're worse than devils!"

Gata, still kneeling, lifted her face so that they might see, and shut her lips and eyes tight in order not to give way weakly.

This was not the Gata, all cream and roses, whom they had known. Upon the face of this Gata, below a close-clipped

skull from which stood up three savage horns of hair, were laid three wide, grotesque bands of color. One, chalk-white, obliterated the smooth beauty of forehead and brows and upper eyelids. One, as blood-red as a wound, stretched from lower lids to upper lip and from ear to ear. The third, blotting out lips that had been coral, and marring the dimpled chin, was a dull black.

"Tattoo," she told them.

"Dear girl! Dear girl!" Leonie was weeping aloud. "They hated you because you were white and beautiful! Oh, the snakes! The snakes!"

"What's wrong, Leonie?" Trupp called

from the boat.

Phelps answered in her stead.

"God help her!" gasped the trader, when he understood.

"My face, shees swell ver' moch," Gata told Phelps; "but affer w'ile shees not so

beeg an' fat."

Having fed their horror upon her pitifully maimed and discolored features, where Gata Naro, the white girl, was forever hidden away under weird and savage markings, they let their look go lower, to a slender body which, save for a short native skirt of grasses, was entirely nude. As the light gradually increased, they could see more of the ghastly truth concerning her treatment.

"What are you wearing?" Phelps asked—but he did not mean that rustling, kneelength skirt of grasses. "What is it that you've got on?"

Again that nervous little laugh.

"I ain' got on dress," Gata protested.

" All this, shees awther t'ing."

What was about her body to the waist, and on her slender arms and young legs, was not anything like a dress. Nor had the tattooing hammer worked here, tapping in indestructible colors. Instead, a dye brush had been used. Alternating with wide white belts, which were untouched areas of Gata's fair, soft skin, were gaudy stripes and splotches of orange, blue, scarlet, and green. Around the girlish throat, and far down her young bosom, orange formed a collar. She was belted in bright green. Arms and legs bore adroitly shaped patterns that were somehow familiar.

"I sure 'nough butterfly now," Gata

explained.

Butterfly! The women had done their work with just that in mind. It was all

the more evident when, bowing her head toward the sand, she showed them, in the steadily stronger light, her bare, curiously figured back.

Leonie Vannier, her eyes streaming, mourned at the destruction of what had

been exquisite.

"She was so lovely!" she wept. "So wonderful! So darling and beautiful! And it's all gone—all gone!"

Gata ignored the weeping girl. From under her ghastly, swollen lids looked her dark eyes. She gazed up at Phelps entreatingly, lovingly.

"I don' unnerstan' how I looks, Messer Phalps," she told him. "If you likes me,

I don' care."

Her hand was still in his. It was no longer the soft, fair hand of a white girl, but paint-stained in grotesque lines and circles. He gave the vivid fingers a comforting pressure.

"You're a brave girl!" he told her husk-

ily. "A brave girl!"

"Ai!" There was a little catch in her voice. "Brave! Only now Leonie, shees more fine for look at, eh? Eleenay, shees more fine. All Leepoohu girl, shees also more fine. My good look, shees tattoo 'way; but, Messer Phalps, I jus' same as always!"

Day broke, like the sudden opening of a colossal flower. Sky, sea, and island were miraculously showered with rose and gold. The strip of sand reflected a dazzling light. Crouching upon it, Gata made a weirdly vivid figure, before which was the burned out torch.

"Messer Phalps," she went on, her blackened lips trembling with eagerness, "say you stays on Leepoohu, I don' expec' you marries me—no! All same Banna, I work for you! I work hard! I be your servan'!"

Her hands dropped to clasp Phelps's feet. As she groveled, her multicolored body bowed before him, he gazed down at her as a mourner gazes at an open grave. Then, with a helpless shake of the head, he stooped, freed himself from her hold, and turned away.

"Leonie," he said brokenly, "you talk

to her. I-I can't!"

XVI

· Only a few yards away, its nose pressed into the sand, was a canoe, its stern lifting and falling lazily in the gentle waves.

Phelps walked unsteadily toward it. An-

other cry was wrung from Gata.
"You go?" On her painted, grassdraped knees, she made a little forward start, holding out both colorful arms. "Ai, you can'! You can'! No! No-o-o-o!"

Trupp was a short distance out. His big face had a greenish, earthen tint, like the

face of a man already dead.

"I can hear voices up in the ravines," declared. "We'd better get away, he declared. Leonie!"

Phelps waited, holding the canoe; but Leonie was still staring down at Gata.

"I can't go and leave her," she answered. "Some one's got to help her. If she'll come-"

The tufted head swung from side to side slowly, and the dark lips tried to smile.

"I can' come away from Leepoohu now," said Gata. "No. Now shees my islan' always—always!"
"Leonie!" It was the trader again, his

tone sharp with fear. "I can see some one up in the grove! Come on, I tell you! Don't be a fool!"

Phelps had faced round. He lifted a hand to Leonie, gesturing to her to join

"I can't let them hurt you," he said. "Oh. Warren!" she answered. "What can I do? What can I do?"

Trupp began to argue angrily.

"If you was on the beach, tattooed across the face like a Solomon Islander, what d'you think she'd do? Why, she'd laugh her darned head off! Come on! Do you want to be killed?"

Gata half turned about, bent toward the other girl, and laid her bright-figured hands upon Leonie's shoes, stroking them.

"You too good to me, Leonie," she confessed. Her voice was gentle, resigned. "Trupp, hees righ' bout me. Always I looks like wite girl, but I ac's like natif. Well, now no more w'ite girl, Leonie. Natif inside, an' also natif outside; so I stays here!"

Suddenly she rose. Under her chalky lids her eyes of dusky velvet shone like jewels. Her black-lipped mouth curved in a valiant smile. The butterfly was not wholly crushed, not broken. Stoutly she put out a painted hand.

"Pretty soon," she went on, "Messer Langdon, hees come. Messer Langdon, hees always my good frien'. Hees halp me, Leonie. So if you go, all righ'."

"Gata!" the elder girl answered. "The women here, what do they know? Noth-They're utterly ignorant. Maybe you are native outside now; but, Gata, you're the smartest woman on Leepoohu. They haven't tattooed your brain. Remember-inside, you're all white!"

" Ai!"

For one moment, then, the arms of each reached out to clasp the other in farewell. To Leonie Vannier that was a bitterly sad moment. It was Gata who disengaged her slender, striped body from the hold of the other and gently pushed the elder girl to-ward the waiting boat. Turning seaward, blind with tears, and her face working with grief, Leonie Vannier stepped into the water.

Phelps climbed into the canoe.

" Hurry, dear," he urged.

It was then that down through the palm grove, from the jungle edge, there came a voice-shrill, jeering, defiant, and full of triumph:

"Ain' shees all beautiful, tha' Mees Gata Naro, w'ite girl? Ain' shees all lofely?" Then, shrieking out in joy: "Butterfly! Butterflv!"

"Christopher!" cried Trupp, spluttering

and panting.

He began to wield his paddle furiously. putting more salt water between his out-

rigger and the shore.

Leonie was beside the other boat, in water that caught at the bottom of her skirt, swirling it. Before climbing into the canoe, she turned to answer the voice from the border of the forest.

"We're not done with you!" she prom-"You're not done with the whites, ised.

either!"

What followed was startling, unforgetable. With a soft plud-plud of bare feet, the women came scampering into sight among the tall, slender boles of the coconuts. Like Gata, every one of them wore a short skirt of grasses. Like her, too, the hair of each was short and tufted; the face, body, and limbs were striped and splotched. A riot of bright colors, they swept down the slope, dividing to pass Gata, and charging until their painted ankles were washed by the surf.

"They'll swamp us!" Phelps cried, striv-

ing to pull Leonie into the canoe.

But, as if satisfied that the hated whites were out from the land, and ready to depart, the women came no farther than the edge of the water. Halting, they tossed their arms into the air.

"Ai! Ai! Ai!" they shouted.

"Look at them!" breathed Leonie, horrified. "Oh, look at them!"

The island of Leepoohu had gone completely sayage.

Leonie gazed from one wild creature to another.

"Which is Eleenay?" she demanded.
"I want to speak to Eleenay Britto. Come out from the others, Eleenay!"

The women did not move, except to turn their patterned faces from side to side, looking at one another. Then, as if the humor of the situation suddenly struck them, they burst into inordinate laughter, twisting their bodies and flinging their arms about.

"Eleenay's there." Leonie spoke low to Phelps. "I feel sure of it. That big one—that might be Banna. The bony one is probably Kuruh; but they're all painted alike, and how shall we ever be able to punish Eleenay, if we can't recognize her?"

Aloud and angrily, with a warning finger pointed, she addressed the throng.

"When the cutter comes, you'll see what will happen! They'll make you give up Eleenay Britto! She's a murderer, and they'll hang her!"

Another explosion of laughter. In the midst of it, from the rest there darted a slender, lithe figure, splashing its way toward Leonie. Leonie advanced a foot to meet it.

"Gata!" she cried. "Come with us—away from this—"

The slender figure — not Gata's, but Eleenay's—threw itself fiercely upon her, bearing her into the water before Phelps could fling himself out of the boat to help. His cry, as he tumbled sidewise, was echoed by another; and in the same second that he seized Leonie, another woman was at his elbow, grappling furiously with Eleenay.

Drenched and choking, he drew Leonie up, half threw her into the canoe, and pushed it out. As he followed it, behind him the two painted figures still struggled desperately, with hoarse cries, while the horde on the sand danced and whooped with the wild excitement, and the water foamed and flew.

The uproar was all the louder and wilder when one of the struggling women disappeared beneath the surface of the shallow water, the other holding her under. Leonie, now several boat lengths away, screamed in terror, and strove, while Phelps restrained her, to throw herself out of the canoe and return to the rescue.

"She'll drown Gata!" Leonie protested.
"She'll drown Gata!"

The two figures in the water had ceased to struggle. The one that was upright now swung around toward the boat, and, smiling at Leonie, showed, between black lips, not small teeth that were dark and crumbling, but two rows that were even and white.

" Gata!"

The victor continued to grin, waving a gayly painted hand.

"All ri', Leonie! All ri'!" she sang out cheerfully.

At that, among the women there rose a murmur that swelled into a chorus of amazement. Again they turned their clipped and curiously horned heads this way and that, rolling their dark eyes in their grotesque masks of faces.

Taking her time, and flirting the water from her arms, Gata waded shoreward. As she came near the women, she flung out her hands in an authoritative gesture.

"Stan' back!" she commanded tersely. They stared, wavered, drew in their breath, and swayed away from her like a regiment obeying an officer.

Now her feet were once more upon the sand. She halted, a small hand on her dripping skirt at either hip, and calmly looked over the crowd. As heretofore, she was again the one upon whom all eyes were instinctively fixed. As proud and poised as ever, she put up her blackened chin.

"Now!" she pronounced decisively. "Unnerstan? Tha' awther one, shees all finish. I are natif, same as res' of you. So! W'at you say if we go now for catch 'em pig for eat? Ha-a! Go on up—quick!"

Looking back from the boats, which were floating out and away, the exiled trio saw the women of Leepoohu suddenly begin to scatter. Under the order of their new leader, who had not threatened them with punishment, and with whoops of glee in which mingled a note of relief, they ran to obey her, brightening the white beach with their fantastic bodies, like a flock of giant butterflies.

The Matador

A SENTIMENTAL EPISODE IN THE CAREER OF GRAVES, THE HARD-HEARTED OFFICE MANAGER

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

ECHNICALLY Graves was the personnel manager, but we called him "the matador" because it was his job to deal the death blow, to give the fatal thrust. He had, in other words, to do the " firing."

He had developed a beautiful technique, and, like all good workmen, he enjoyed his work. He was really a very kind-hearted fellow. His idea was that it did people any amount of good to be discharged, if it . were done in the right way-if, for instance, you told the departing one, exactly why he or she was no longer wanted.

It was necessary, he said, to keep the nicest balance between candor and brutality. What you wanted was to destroy conceit without injuring self-respect. He added proudly that all the people whom he had fired remained his firm friends.

I asked him how he knew this, and I refused to believe it a proof of friendliness that these victims had never yet waylaid and assaulted him. He said, however, that he could always tell-that no one could deceive him. I denied that any man could know he had never been deceived. Such a negative statement was impossible to prove.

He brushed all this aside, and continued

to explain his technique.

"I never tell a man that we're laying him off because business is bad," he said. "I try to show him what defects in himself make him the kind of man who's always laid off as soon as business drops. And as for those printed slips in a pay envelope-' Your services will not be required after such and such a date '-inhuman, I call that. No, sir! I'll call the fellow, or the girl, as the case may be, into my office, and I'll say something like this:

"' Now see here, So-and-So,' I'll say,

'I'm going to give you the gate; and if you'll listen to me fair-mindedly, it 'll be the gate to something a whole lot better."

" Always?" I asked. "Why, yes," said he.

"Of course," I continued, "you've kept a record of the subsequent careers of all the poor devils you've fired, so that you know exactly how much they've benefited by your valediction?"

"Well," said Graves; "well—"
"Of course," I went on, "you keep a card index? You write down the fault for which you discharge the fellow, and you keep track of the length of time it takes him to overcome that fault?"

" Well-"

"What, Graves?" said I sternly. "You make me a positive statement, you tell me it benefits people to be discharged by you, and you have not one fact by which to substantiate your statement. I demand to be shown one of these alleged persons!"

"Well-" he said again.

He was so much perturbed that I hadn't the heart to perturb him further. He was such an honest, artless, enthusiastic fellow, and altogether so likable, that I can't for the life of me explain why it was so natural to worry and badger him; but everybody did. When some especially woeful-looking derelict passed by, some one was sure to call Graves to the window and say something like-

"See here, Graves! Isn't that the shipping clerk you discharged for not keeping

his nails manicured?"

Rather gruesomely, we used to read aloud from the newspapers various reports of suicides.

Unknown man found in the river-nothing to identify him but a scrap of paper in his pocket, on which was written "Graves drove me to this."

These fictitious papers varied. Sometimes they said:

And after Graves had turned me down, What could I do but go and drown? Graves told me all I didn't oughter, Despair then drove me to the water.

We kept up a fiction that twelve desperate men were banded together to take vengeance on him, and that their motto was "Give Graves the final discharge." I dare say we were pretty tiresome about it, and sometimes I am afraid we hurt the poor

devil more than we intended.

Of course "firing" was not all that Graves had to do. There was also the hiring, but he wasn't nearly so enthusiastic about that-or at least he was warier, for his mistakes in character analysis could be too readily checked up. He pretended that he took every one on trial, and withheld even mental opinions until he had observed the applicant.

That, however, wasn't true. Many and many a time he was tremendously hopeful about some fellow who turned out to be quite worthless. I say "fellow," because he was notably reticent about the girls, and

never hopeful.

He objected to girls in an office. He said that the principle of the thing was wrong, and so on; but the real reason was that he was afraid of them. They knew this very well. Once he had had a booklet of "Suggestions" printed and circulated among them. He wrote it in a chatty and reasonable style, as for instance:

It isn't a question of morals, but one of tone. We can't have quite the tone I'm sure we should all like to have in this office while some of our young ladies wear peekaboo waists and openwork stockings, and put paint and powder on their faces. In a ballroom these things are all well enough,

The next morning he received a visit from the severe and efficient Miss Kelly.

"Mr. Graves," said she, "about your 'Suggestions'-I have been in this office six years, and have never seen a peekaboo waist. I have not observed that openwork hosiery has been worn. My department has asked me to mention this to you, as we feel it an unmerited slight. Incidentally, Mr. Graves," she added, "girls don't as a rule wear waists in a ballroom. Even stenographers have some knowledge of etiquette!"

The conscientious Graves bought a household periodical, and found no mention of peekaboo blouses and openwork stockings. Unfortunately he was discovered reading this magazine, and he had to explain. He became a little annoyed at hearing so much laughter.

"Oh, shut up!" he exclaimed. "I know I've heard of those things. Read articles

about 'em in the newspapers."

"But when?" somebody wished to know. "When did you last cast a glance at a girl, oh, innocent and artless Graves?"

"Well," he said, scowling, "the difference is so small that no one but an idiot would laugh. I might have said 'sheer

hosiery ' and 'chiffon blouses.'"

Graves talking about chiffon blouses was too much. He regretted those "Suggestions," and made no more. We subscribed to a fashion magazine for him, and by a most pleasing error it came addressed to "Miss F. Graves." This was even better than we had planned.

ONE day Graves came to me with a

beaming face.

"You know I don't often express an opinion on an untried worker," he said; "but this time I've made a find. I've got just the sort of girl I want in the office. She's a college graduate; comes of an old Southern family—"

"And her father died, and she was obliged to go out into the world and earn

a living," I said.

He was amazed.

" How did you find out about that?" he demanded.

"She hasn't had any experience," I continued; "but ah, what class!"

"Now see here," said Graves. "You've

been talking to Miss Clare!"

"I know Miss Clare like my own sister." I told him. "I've met her a thousand times. I've read her in books and seen her in movies-"

"Oh, that!" said Graves. "Well, you're entirely wrong, you chump. She's absolutely original."

"I knew that," said I. "She makes the most wonderful clothes for herself out of old quilts, and she can get up the most delicious little suppers for two for thirty cents-"

He laughed, with that disarming good

humor of his.

"Well, I haven't got as far as that yet," he said. "I don't know what she eats or

makes her clothes out of, but I can tell you this-she's the neatest, most sensible-look-

ing girl in the place!"

When I saw Miss Clare, I had to admit that in some ways she deviated from the usual type. She was what you might call a tall, willowy blonde. She had fine eyes, and knew it; but she was not kittenish, or pathetic, or appealing. She was doggedly in earnest. I liked her for that.

When I knew her better, I liked her for many other things, too. She was as honest and candid as daylight, and she left her fine old Southern family and her college and all her past glories where they be-

longed. She was there to work.

I was really sorry when the efficient

Miss Kelly spoke about her.

"She's stupid!" she told me, with fierce exasperation. "I've told Mr. Graves several times that she doesn't measure up to our standard of efficiency. I don't see why he keeps her on!"

"Beauty in daily life," said I. "It's what Morris recommended. She's an ornament to the office, Miss Kelly. She has

artistic value."

"Superfluous ornaments have no value anywhere," said Miss Kelly. "I worked once for an interior decorator, and I learned that. A thing must not only be beautiful in itself, but in harmony with its surroundings, and serving some definite purpose. She isn't and doesn't, and she ought to be scrapped!"

Now not only was Miss Kelly a notably good-looking young woman, and intelligent and alert and sensible, but she was infallible. Graves knew it. He had had other disagreements with her, and had always been worsted. Still, for a time, he defied

her in regard to Miss Clare.

"D'you know," he said to me, "I hate like poison to discharge that poor girl! You see, this is her first job, and it 'll be hard for her to get another, with only a

four weeks' record here."

"Oh, no, Graves," said I. "Not at all! After you've talked to her and pointed out her faults, she—well, she'll get rid of her faults, don't you see? And after that—"

Then Graves declared, with a sort of

* magnificence:

"She hasn't any faults, exactly. It's lack of training that's the trouble. If she could stay on here a little longer, she'd do as well as the others—and better. She has brains!"

"Why can't she stay?" I asked.

"Her output's below the average," he said dismally. "Miss Kelly keeps charts and so on." He scowled. "Miss Kelly's worth her weight in gold, and all that," he said, "but she's pig-headed. I've tried to explain to her that it's actually more efficient to keep and train an employee, even if you have to shift him to another department, than to break in a new one. I've shown her in black and white what the actual cost of this eternal hiring and firing is; but no! She jumps down my throat with a lot of her own figures about what this Miss Clare costs the department every day. Hair-splitting, that's all it is!"

Graves should have been warned, each time he opened his mouth, that what he said would be used against him. Of course this was. Each time he dealt the death blow, we reminded him of the cost of this eternal hiring and firing, and how much

more efficient it was, and so on.

Miss Clare was shifted out of Miss Kelly's department into another, which had a human man, young Allen, at its head; but he, too, rebelled.

"She won't do," he said to Graves.

"She tries, but she's—well, I don't know just what the trouble is. She's simply not

on the job."

"I'll have a talk with her," said Graves.
"I'll see if I can find out what's wrong."

Ш

I saw Miss Clare going into Graves's office, and I felt sorry for him. I shouldn't have enjoyed pointing out her faults to her. She was very young and quite without affectation, but she had a natural and altogether charming dignity about her. You couldn't think of her as an office worker; you were obliged to remember all the time that she was a woman.

She came out after half an hour, looking downcast and grave. She smiled at me, as she passed, with the air of a lady who never neglects her social obligations, but I fancied

her lips quivered a trifle.

"Poor girl!" I thought. "She's out of place here. She hasn't the stuff in her for a competitive worker. She'll never get on!"

I was so sympathetic to Graves that he told me the story of the interview.

"The poor girl's worried sick," he said.
"It seems she's trying to support her mother, and she's so desperately afraid she won't make good that she can't do her

work. She does try, you know, and she's fairly accurate, but she's slow, and she knows it. She said she'd never tried to hurry before, and when she does, she gets nervous." He paused, and frowned a little. "Well," he said, "it's irregular, but I think it 'll work. I'm going to let her come half an hour earlier than the other girls and stay an hour later, so that she can finish her share of the work."

"That's hard on her, isn't it?" I asked. "Not so hard as getting fired," he answered. "She's got a queer point of view about that. She says that if she were discharged, she'd be so discouraged that she'd -I think she said she'd go to pieces."

"Lacks stamina," I observed.

"Well," said Graves, "there's more than one sort of stamina. It takes some grit for a girl brought up as she's been to tackle the job of supporting herself and her mother, I can tell you!"

I agreed with him, and said so, and he was delighted; but he paid heavily for his kind-heartedness. Miss Kelly let the thing go on for one week. Then, on Saturday morning, she appeared before him.

"Mr. Graves," she said, "after due consideration, I have decided that the only course for me is to leave this office. I shall remain, of course, until you have filled my position to your satisfaction."

She knew perfectly well how invaluable,

how irreplaceable she was.

"Now, see here, Miss Kelly," said Graves, as man to man. "This wants talking about. Sit down and let's discuss it frankly."

She did sit down, and I thought she

looked alarmingly frank.

"Certainly, Mr. Graves," she said very pleasantly.

"Now, then, what's the trouble? Not enough salary?"

"My salary is quite as much as the overhead permits," said she. "In proportion to the calculated profits, it is perfectly fair and adequate. No, Mr. Graves-it's a question of prestige and morale."

Graves looked serious.

" My girls are constantly coming to me now with requests to be allowed to finish their work at irregular and unauthorized hours, instead of keeping up to the standard output required by my department. They assert that a girl in Mr. Allen's department was allowed to do this, and they had never understood that employment in his department carried any special privileges. I went to Mr. Allen about this. I pointed out to him that it affected the morale of my girls to see one of his people favored, but he told me he could do nothing. He said it was not his idea, and—'

"All right!" said Graves, suddenly getting up, with a flushed face and a constrained smile. "I-very likely you're right, Miss Kelly. I'll-I'll make some ad-

justment that 'll suit vou."-

"Please don't consider suiting me," said Miss Kelly. "It's the morale of the office, Mr. Graves."

And she went away like Pallas Athene from a battleground.

I honestly pitied Graves, he was so

wretched. "Well, you know," he said, "she's right. It does upset the routine, and so on; but, hang it all, that girl simply couldn't stand being discharged! She has pluck enough, and all that, but she's sensitive. She's too darned sensitive entirely. I wish to Heaven she'd picked out some other office to start in! She's got some fool idea in her head that it's the first job that makes or breaks you. It's no use pointing out her faults to her; she knows 'em. She's trying to over-

come them; but she's just naturally slow."

He tried her at filing. Not for long, though; the tumult was too great. He tried her at bookkeeping; but she herself admitted that figures were not her forte.

"There must be something that girl can do, or can be taught to do!" he cried in despair. "Everybody has some aptitude, and she's not stupid. She can talk well about books and so on."

"Do you talk to her, Graves?" I asked.

" Much?"

"Oh, yes," he answered innocently. "I talk to her a lot. I try to find out what she's adapted for; but I can't, for the life of me. And yet I can't fire her. I simply can't do it. She says no one else would give her the same chance I do; and that's no lie. She wouldn't last a week in any other office!

"Unless-" said I, and hesitated.

"Unless what?" asked Graves. "Unless there were another personnel manager as—as conscientious as you."

"Well," said Graves, "it's this waythere's a big responsibility attached to my job. I shouldn't like to think I'd destroyed the self-confidence of a girl like Miss Clare."

"Anything would be better than that,"

Graves looked at me with dawning

suspicion.

"Well, you're all wrong," he said severely, "if you think there's any-any personal element in this. It's simply that I've got a heavy responsibility-"

"You bet you have!" said I, and left

him with that.

THE thing began to assume a dramatic aspect. Graves was a haunted man. He was obliged, or he felt himself obliged, to find a place for Miss Clare in our organization, and the task was a hideous one.

He changed. His brisk self-assurance gave place to a harassed air, and he acquired a new and rather touching way of appealing to the rest of us. In fact, we were all deeply concerned about Miss Clare. We would go joyously to Graves, to tell him we thought something had turned up that would suit her. We always phrased it that way; but it never did suit her.

In the final analysis this was Graves's fault, because it was he who had made the office so brutally efficient. To be more frank than modest, it was not so much that Miss Clare was very bad as that the rest of us were so good. She failed to come up to our standard. Graves was the Frankenstein who had created this monster, and now he had to suffer for it.

One morning he arrived with a grim and

desperate expression.

"An execution?" I asked.

I had become very friendly with Graves during this little complication. He seemed to me less amusing than before, and much

more human and engaging.

"Yes," said he. "She's got to go. I've been thinking it over pretty seriously. I'm afraid I've wasted the firm's time and money in this instance; but you don't know how hard-"

"Graves," I said, "you're inconsistent. You'll destroy any number of harmless lives, and boast of it, and then you'll apologize for having been kindly and generous and altogether admirable."

He turned red.

"Oh, get out!" he said, like a small boy, but the sympathy pleased him. "Well, you see, it's-well, she tries hard."

No one denied that. Indeed, the unfor-

tunate Miss Clare looked exhausted and wan from her terrific efforts. She came early in the morning, before there was any work given out, and she was always contriving plans for working through her lunch hour. She was always thwarted in this, however. We were too efficient to allow people not to eat; neither was she allowed to stay after five o'clock.

This day, as on so many others, she was still typing frantically at half past twelve, hoping to escape detection; but Miss Kelly

espied her.

"You ought to be out for lunch, Miss Clare," she said, in a human, decent, kindly way. "Run along now. You'll do all the better when you come back."

This was painful to me, because I knew that the poor girl was going to be fired when she came back; but she didn't suspect. She raised her weary, anxious eyes to Miss Kelly's face.

"Please let me stay!" she entreated. "I've fallen behind, and this hour will help

me to catch up."

"No, Miss Clare, it won't. You'll be ill, and—" Miss Kelly began.

She was interrupted by the suave and mellow voice of Mr. Reddiman, our great president.

"What's this?" said he. "What's this? One of our young women making herself

ill, eh? Working too hard?"

Every newcomer in our office marveled at Mr. Reddiman, and resented him, and was convinced that he had no ability, no force, no possible qualifications for being president of the company; but that never lasted. Mr. Reddiman grew on you little by little until, after a few months, you were willing to admit that you could scarcely have done better yourself.

He had a mild, slow way. He put me in mind of an old gardener pottering about in a greenhouse, when, with his hands clasped behind him, he walked through the various rooms, stopping here and there. He was a notably successful gardener, however. He made the business grow; andhe got things done.

"I'm not working too hard!" said Miss Clare, perilously close to tears. "I don't want any lunch. I want to finish these

"No, no, no, no!" said he pleasantly. "That won't do. We can't have that!"

The poor creature was blandly hustled out of the office, well knowing that Miss Kelly would be questioned about her, and that Miss Kelly would answer with com-

plete frankness.

But neither Miss Clare nor any other person could have imagined what actually took place. Personally, while giving due credit to Mr. Reddiman's kind heart, acumen, and wisdom, I am inclined to give still more credit to Miss Clare's eyes; for I assure you that those eyes, when filled with tears and raised to your face, were terribly potent. As I said before, they were blue, but only the advertising department could adequately describe the sort of blue.

Listen to the sequel, and bear in mind that I saw her look up at Mr. Reddiman. I know that if I had been Mr. Reddiman,

I, too-

Well, he went in to see Mr. Graves, whom he greatly admired and valued.

"In regard to this—er—Miss Clare," he said. "I hear from Miss Kelly—"

"Yes, I know," Graves answered miserably. "I'm going to discharge her this afternoon."

"You would be doing very wrong," said Mr. Reddiman severely.

Graves was naturally astounded.

"I've done all I can to place her—" he began, but Mr. Reddiman interrupted.

"Graves," said he, "I'm afraid you are just a little inclined to overlook the human element. After all, Graves, what is more valuable in an employee than zeal? er-person who works with zeal and loyalty is, to my mind, very much more desirable than one of your efficient, soulless machines. The human element, Graves, the human element! This — er — Miss Clare seems to be most earnest. I learn that she comes early and remains late. To my personal knowledge, she wished to-day to forego her lunch in order to complete her work. I shall not interfere in your province, of course, but I hope-I hope strongly - that you will reconsider your decision."

It was Graves himself who told me about the interview.

"Well," he said, "what could I do? Heaven knows I didn't want to say a word against the poor girl; but in duty to the company I had to tell him what I'd done. He listened, and then he said again that I overlooked the human element. He said that what she needed was encouragement, and that she could start to-morrow morning as his secretary!"

"Aren't you pleased?" I asked.

"Pleased?" he exclaimed. "I'm—I'm horrified! I'm—it's outrageous! It's cruel! I can't bear to think of it!" He paused. "It's the end of her," he said tragically. "She's about as well fitted to be his secretary as she is to be president of the Chamber of Commerce. It's bound to end in a big row!"

I didn't agree with him.

V

MISS CLARE arrived the next morning a little pale and nervous, but wonderfully happy. She was always neat and dainty, but this morning she had a sort of festive air, produced, as well as I can tell you, by

little extra ruffles and by magic.

Looking into Mr. Reddiman's private room, and seeing her there, with her fair head bent and her fragile hands so busy, in all her gallant and touching youth, I entertained serious thoughts about the human element. I understood the ancient institution of chivalry. I fancied I knew exactly how knights used to feel about forlorn damosels. It seemed idiotic to estimate a creature as valiant and sweet as she by the number of words she could turn out per minute. Indeed, I forgot all about the economic system for a time, in a long meditation upon a system considerably older.

I rejoiced in her innocent and happy triumph. I delighted in seeing her walk past Miss Kelly and smile at her before

entering the august private room.

Graves was decidedly under a cloud now. We were all a little hard on him. We forgot his kindly efforts on her behalf, and remembered only that he had been on the point of discharging one who now worthily occupied an important post.

"You see, Graves, I was right," said Mr.

Reddiman.

The rest of us agreed in condemning Graves for a sort of inhuman severity.

Three days passed. Then Graves heard

from Mr. Reddiman once more.

"It was naturally a—a tentative arrangement—something in the nature of an experiment," the president said. "I am well satisfied with Miss Clare's zeal and industry, but she lacks experience. I have no doubt she can work up to some superior position; but in the meantime, Graves, wouldn't it be possible to find her some work that carries less responsibility? She's very young, you know."

The implication was that Graves had thrust monstrous responsibilities upon her young shoulders, that he was a sort of Si-

mon Legree.

"She's a young woman of education and refinement," Mr. Reddiman continued. "I should imagine it would not be difficult to find a place for her in an organization of this size and scope. I don't mind saying, Graves, that I am very favorably impressed with Miss Clare. Of course, if you're convinced that she's not useful—"

"Very well!" said Graves brusquely.

"I'll try."

And there he was, with the whole thing to begin over again, and with the wind of public opinion dead against him. I observed him sitting at his desk, with his stubby hair ruffled, his sturdy shoulders hunched, and a look of unassuageable despair upon his not very mobile face. He looked up as I approached.

"Go on!" said he. "Tell me I'm a brute! Of course, I know that what I'm really paid a good salary for is to run a charitable institution here. I know—"

"Look here, Graves!" said I. "I'll try your Miss Clare in my department—"

"She's not my Miss Clare," he returned, with vigor. "She's—" He got up. "I'll tell you what," he said. "She's an albatross! You know the story about the fellow who had one tied round his neck, and couldn't get rid of it."

"That's not very chivalrous," said I.

"Well, I'm not paid to be chivalrous," he said. "I know she's a fine girl—a—a lovely girl; but she's out of place here. She can't do one darned thing well enough to deserve a salary for it. If old Reddiman wants me to start a training school, very well, I'll do it; but if he wants me to keep up the standard of efficiency I've set, then he's got to give me a free hand—that's all!"

"She can start in with me to-morrow," I said rather stiffly.

VI

I had my own ideas about office management. No private room for me! I sat out with all the others, in a little railed off pen. I contended that the moral effect of my being always visible, and always busy, was admirable. Graves, on the contrary, upheld the principle of remaining invisible and popping out suddenly.

I said that my department was a little democracy.

. "And you were elected the head of it by popular vote, weren't you?" inquired Graves, with irony. "Bet you wouldn't be willing to put it to the vote now. All bunk! Humbug! You're an autocrat, and so am I!"

I remembered this the next morning, when Miss Clare started to work for me, and I resolved to be a benevolent autocrat. The poor girl had lost her triumphant air. She was crestfallen, anxious, apprehensive.

"I'll let her see that I have confidence

in her," I thought.

I gave her some letters to answer herself, without my dictating. They certainly were not letters of importance. In fact, it would make small difference to the business whether they were ever answered or not.

Hypocritically, I told myself I ought to keep an eye on her. As a matter of fact, I couldn't have helped it, because she was the most incredibly lovely creature.

Her concentration was distressing. I felt inclined to tell her that the letters weren't worth all her trouble—that no letters could be. She was very nervous. I saw her put sheet after sheet into the type-writer, only to take it out and crumple

Naturally, she knew our excessive dislike for paper being wasted; and after a while I saw her stealthily stuffing those crumpled sheets into a drawer, where they wouldn't be noticed. Then, suddenly, she straightened her shoulders, gave a despairing glance round the office, pulled all the paper out of the drawer, and put it into the wastebasket. It was a small thing, but it touched me. Whenever I looked at her, and saw that incriminating mass in the basket beside her, in full light of day, I mentally saluted her as an honorable soul.

There had come in the morning mail a letter from a rather doubtful customer, inclosing a check for his last bill and a new order. I felt pretty sure he was ordering a bit more than the traffic would stand, yet he seemed to have substantial backing, and it wouldn't do to risk offending him. It was Saturday, and I had meant to talk the thing over with Mr. Reddiman before putting through the order on Monday, when a telegram came:

Ship goods to-day. Wire, if impossible, and cancel order.

This was very awkward. We were somewhat overstocked just then, and not particularly busy, so that it would have been easy enough to ship the stuff; but I was reluctant to take the responsibility. At the same time I didn't want to cancel an order of that size.

There wasn't much time for thought. I sent for my assistant. I told him to take the check down to the bank it was drawn on and get it cashed. I also suggested his

seeing the manager.

"What bank is it?" he asked.

"I don't remember," said I; "but you'll

see by the check."

And then I couldn't find the check. It was nearly eleven already, and there wasn't a minute to waste. I turned over every paper on my desk; I made every one else do the same. Check and letter were abso-

lutely gone.

it

ed

ı't

M

g,

ie,

ıt.

r.

e.

ce

r-

ly

SS

to

t,

15

I

t-I

3-

a e y e - e

t

-

3

vostit

Nothing like this had ever happened before during my régime. I couldn't believe Now that it's well in the past, I will admit that perhaps I didn't take it very tranquilly; but, after all, it was not soothing, when I knew some one must be to blame, to have people make idiotic suggestions about my looking in my pocket. Was I in the habit of putting the mail into my pocket?

"The thing's going to be found," said I, " and found now. Empty the wastebaskets, and see if it's been thrown away by mis-

The office boy appeared to enjoy doing this, but the rest of them failed in loyalty. No one looked worried or distressed.

"It's sure to turn up," said one.

Another almost suggested that such a letter had never existed.

Attracted by the excitement, Miss Kelly appeared, followed by others who had no business to come. How cool and reasonable they all were!

"Mercy!" observed Miss Kelly. "What a quantity of paper thrown away!"

She spoke, of course, of the contents of poor Miss Clare's basket, now turned out upon a newspaper. She approached it, and

picked up one or two sheets.

"It seems to me scarcely justifiable to waste a sheet merely for writing 'Dear Bir," said she, "or a wrong figure in the date. Errors like that can easily be - is this the missing letter, by any chance?"

It was the letter, and the check as well,

torn into fragments.

"Oh, I didn't know!" cried Miss Clare. "I'm so awfully sorry! I must have taken

it by accident and torn it up with-with some other things. I'm so sorry!"

But my exasperation was too great to be melted even by tears in those incomparable

eyes.
"You ought to be sorry!" I said, and

No use recounting the rest of my badtempered outburst. I paid for it later in very genuine regret.

VII

It was probably due to ill temper, but it was attributed to my wonderful business foresight that I did not ship those goods. Mr. Reddiman sent for me on Monday morning and praised my wisdom, good sense, and judgment. That customer was

to be dropped.

This praise did not make me happy, but quite the contrary. I knew I didn't deserve it—in this instance, that is. I was already very remorseful on the score of Miss Clare. I remembered things of which I hadn't been aware at the time - her white face, her quivering lip, her wide, tearful eyes. had gone away, after listening to every word I said, and she had not returned.

It would be hard to describe how startling, how conspicuous, was her absence. I missed her from rooms, from desks, where she had certainly never been. The wan sunshine made phantoms of her bright head in dim corners. Other and very different voices took on fleeting resemblances to hers. Once I saw the neat, spare form of Miss Kelly taking a drink at the water cooler, and she seemed to melt into the gracious outlines of that lost one.

My conscience troubled me. My heart was heavy. Very long was the day; and at the end of it I secured her address and

went off to see her.

Never mind the eloquent speech I had prepared, for I never uttered one word of it. Suffice it to say that I intended to offer Miss Clare a permanent position, with no

possibility of being fired.

She lived in an apartment house on a side street uptown on the West Side-a street that was just on the border of a slum -a street of woeful and dismal gentility. I rang the bell, blundered down a black, narrow hall, and would have gone upstairs if a voice behind me hadn't murmured:

" Clare?"

Turning, I asserted that a Clare was what I sought, and I was bidden to step

through an open door and into a prim little sitting room. It was dismal there, too, but light enough for me to see that I was confronted by a mother out of a book-a gray-haired, delicate little creature with a smile of invincible innocence and good will.

I said that I came from the office to see Miss Clare. Strictly speaking, this was true; but the implication was not, for my business had nothing to do with the office.

"Am sorry ma daughter's not in," said Mrs. Clare, in her slurred Southern accent. "If you'd care to wait, Ah don't think she'll be long."

So I sat down, and was instantly fed with tea and cake.

"Rosemary made the cake," Mrs. Clare explained. "She's wonderful at baking!"

She was; nothing could have been more delectable. Naturally I praised it, and naturally Mrs. Clare rose to the praise like a trout to a fly. There was something very touching in her artless talk about her child, and something still more touching in the picture she created for me of their gracious

and gentle life together.

"Ah've never heard a sharp word from Rosemary," she assured me. "Ah don't think you could say the same of many other girls in the same circumstances. There's not only her business career that she's so interested in, but she does almost all of the housekeeping as well. She's a wonderful manager, and so clever with her needle! Ah never saw a girl so handy in the house. Of co'se Ah know a girl with her brains and education is just naturally adapted for business, but-" She stopped, with a smile. "Ah'm an old-fashioned woman, Ah reckon. Ah'm glad Rosemary's going to give it up."

"Going to give up business?" said I,

astounded.

"She's been engaged for two years," said she. "That's long enough. Of co'se, dear Denby understood how she felt about proving her ability befo' she settled down, but Ah'm glad it's over. He came up from No'folk yesterday, and he persuaded her to give up her position."

I was suddenly aware that it was late, and that I couldn't wait another minute.

"Ah'm sorry," said she. "Rosemary'll be back sho'tly. She just took Denby to see the Woolworth Building. Ah wish you could have staved to see Denby."

I said how remarkably sorry I was not to see this Denby, but go I would and did.

As I left the house, I ran into Graves, about to enter.

"Old man," said I, "come along with me. I want to talk to you."

I believe I took his arm. Anyhow, I

felt like doing so.

"Graves," I said, "I hope you won't thing I've been underhand or treacherous about this. I'd have told you, only that it came on pretty suddenly. I didn't really know until this morning, and then it put everything else out of my head. I acted upon impulse, Graves-upon my word I did! I missed her so much in the office to-day-"

"Yes," said he, with a sigh. "It was

pretty bad, wasn't it?"

"And I just hurried off, you know-to call upon her. Graves, old man, it's-in fact, there's nothing doing. She's engaged -she's been engaged for two years to some young—"

"Oh, I knew that," said Graves.

"What?" I cried.

"She told me in the very beginning," said Graves. "Naturally she didn't want it talked about, but she explained it to me. It seems this fellow didn't take her seriously enough. He had plenty of money, but he expected her to settle down there in Norfolk and just be his wife. She didn't say so, but I gathered that he's a domineering sort of young chap. She said that if they started in that way, they'd never be happy. She had to show him that she amounted to something on her own account; and he was impressed when she got a job here with us. She showed me a letter, or a part of a letter, from him about it. He got down from his high horse, I can tell you-said he knew she'd be making a sacrifice to give up her career and marry him, but he'd do his best to make it up to her, and so on."

He paused.

"So you see," he said, "it would have been a very bad thing for her-a very serious thing-if she'd been fired. Might have spoiled her whole future life. After she told me that, and appealed to me, why, I had to-don't you see?"

"But, Graves," said I, "didn't you-

weren't you—personally—"
"Pshaw!" said Graves, turning red. "D'you know, my boy, I read a story once about a hangman who was a pretty good sort of fellow when he was at home. Ever occur to you that even the matador mayn't be as black as he's painted?"

Prison Bars

LOVE LAYS A HEALING HAND ON EYES TORTURED BY YEARS OF TRAGEDY

By Isabel Walker

THE shadow of bars fell darkly across a pool of sunlight on the stone floor. There was only one hour in the morning when the sunshine found its way into Antony Craig's cell, through the window in the corridor opposite the barred door. Every day during the fourteen years he had spent in the cell, Antony had wished passionately to see, for once, that golden pool unmarred.

One day, when he had been in prison only five years, Antony had tried to work three of the iron barriers loose. The warden, Mahoney, found him chipping away at the stone with a pocket knife. He had greeted Mahoney with the singularly winning smile that so seldom touched his face,

and said:

"I am freeing the sunlight, not myself.

There's no harm done!"

Afterward, in relating the incident to his wife, the warden, who was a kindly soul,

had added:

"Faith, and he meant it, too! I hated to stop him, at all, at all. He's a painter, they say. Sure, I can't figure out why he ever killed a man. What a fine-lookin', upstandin' lad he was whin he came—not thirty! Now it looks like he do be eatin' the heart out of his body. Poor fellow, he'll not be here whin his time is up, I'm thinkin'!"

But he was there, for even horror and heartbreak do not bring death. The strong desire for endless sleep seems only to feed the flickering flame of life when all other

fuel fails.

Antony Craig was thinking this as he sat on the foot of his cot, and thinking, too, that in a year his term would be up. He arose and walked the narrow length of the cell—five measured steps—he had counted it innumerable times. On the board table lay a calendar. Yes, the 20th of the month was marked in pencil. Twelve months

longer!

From the table he paced to the door—two steps—and stood leaning against the iron rods, close, inflexible, cold to his touch. Again his eyes were drawn to the checkered spot of sunlight on the stone floor. April sunlight! For the calendar said it was April, and there was something in the keen morning air that made itself felt above the dampness and gloom. Only spring could do that.

Strange that after all these years he was able to recall how spring felt! If only he could have ceased to remember! Ah, that was the agony of it—remembering; and yet, if he had blotted out the recollection of spring and what it meant, why, the image of Margaret would have gone. He could not bear that.

Anything else might be endured; for remembering Margaret had saved his reason, had saved his soul. It had kept him, during those first black nights, from crushing out the obstinate spark of existence and ending his wretchedness. He had shared her belief that taking one's life was cowardly—not playing the game, as they both believed so deeply in doing.

How often they had talked this over as they had talked everything over—by the

brookside in the sycamore wood!

The sycamore wood! Before his somber gaze the bars lifted, the crowding walls stretched out, faded, and vanished in the cool green vista of a sloping hillside. There were the gleaming white branches of the sycamores, full of swelling buds. There were the willows trailing their delicate new foliage into the brook that swirled and skipped over the shining pebbles in its path; and beyond the fence, in the open

49

field, was a single apple tree, bending with

Over it all an April sky, deeply blue, with drifting clouds, and Margaret—Margaret running down the hillside to meet him, the sunbeams tangled in her hair, and eyes that mocked those springtime skies.

Why, that picture was to have been his masterpiece! Just this scene—with Margaret in the foreground, her arms full of apple blossoms. He had sketched it in that morning, and had called it "Chanson

d'Avril."

They had talked of nothing else. He knew that the work was good, that in very truth it would establish his fame. Already, before thirty, he had been called a second Whistler. He looked down at the strong, sensitive artist's hands, so unhealthily white—hands that had not held a brush for fourteen years. Could they ever finish that picture? Was the vision of April forever lost to him?

On the threshold of release, fear touched him more coldly, more compellingly, than in all the dragging years that had passed.

He was afraid-afraid!

With a groan he thrust his hands behind him, and walked to the door, staring unseeingly through the bars into the empty corridor. Again he lived through the nightmare that had followed those weeks of happiness. Margaret had left her grandmother's and gone back to join her husband at their New York country place. She had promised Antony that if things became entirely unbearable, she would surely let him know.

From childhood days, when they had been neighbors' children on those same adjoining estates in Maryland, they had never broken promises to each other. That was why, when he had gone to Paris on his scanty savings, with only hopes for a future, he had neither given Margaret a

promise nor asked her for one.

After she turned out to be a beauty, she had been adopted by her wealthy aunt. Antony thought of the day when he came back, five years later, with an established reputation and even a growing fame, to find Margaret married to Harry Howard, whose wealth was the goal of her aunt's ambition. When finally she had yielded to her aunt's constant urgings, she was unaware of Howard's reputation outside his social circle.

It was like Margaret to refuse to get a divorce within a year, as most women

would have done. She said that she had married Howard knowing that she did not love him, and now she must abide by her bargain until he had proved utterly beyond redemption.

Antony knew her desperate unhappiness, and he stormed at her and pleaded with her, but in vain. Then he went away for another year. How savagely, how cease-

lessly, he had worked!

In the spring they met quite without prearrangement. He was taking a brief vacation at the old place in Maryland, and Margaret came down to her grandmother's for her annual visit. A month of wonderful days followed. There were rides and walks over the hills, and long, long talks.

"It can't do any one harm now, Tony," Margaret had said. "It may give me

strength to go on."

He had lingered a while after she left, going every day to the sycamore wood to work on his picture.

Then came the brief message in the

clear, characteristic handwriting:

I can't bear it any longer, Tony. Come!

He had caught the night train for New York, and had reached the Long Island estate by early afternoon the next day. The scene that followed was as distinct to Antony as if etched in steel on his brain.

Harry Howard had come in while they were talking together in the library. Antony saw again the dissipated, heavily flushed face, heard once more the thick, throaty tones as Howard hurled a foul insult at Margaret. She shrank back against the dark paneling, her eyes dilated until the black pupils crowded out the blue, her face dead white. Howard had lurched toward her, his hands clenched. Antony's own arm had shot forward. Then the heavy figure had sprawled on the polished floor between them—dead.

What could motives count against the stark fact? From the mists of those fourteen years in a prison cell a single phrase

flashed back:

"Guilty of manslaughter."

H

ANTONY CRAIC caught at the bars of the door, and a shaft of sunlight struck across his fingers. He looked at it dully. From the open window in the corridor opposite there came straying a vagrant breeze, faintly sweet, soft with springtime. "Chanson

d'Avril!" Antony dropped his head upon his arms.

Outside a step sounded. Mahoney appeared, his broad face wreathed in smiles. The tall, quiet man in No. 33, so different from the other prisoners, had long been the warden's favorite. Antony lifted his head and stared blankly as Mahoney unlocked the door.

"Top o' the morning to ye, Mr. Craig!" In private the warden had always used the conventional title of respect to Antony. "Good news! You were to be leavin' anyhow, next year."

He paused hopefully. Antony nodded. "Yes, I know," he said, remembering the calendar he had marked.

"Well, bein' that you've been actin' so good," Mahoney continued, jingling his keys as an accompaniment to his words, "they'll be after lettin' you out next week instead. Think o' that, now! Sentence shortened a whole year—the word just came."

Something in the genuine good will of the warden's face helped the astounding news to penetrate the frozen crust of Antony's consciousness.

"Not free—not next week? My God, Mahoney, you mean I can go away—for good—next week?"

He clung to the bars of his cell like a man blinded by a sudden flash of light, waiting in anguished suspense for the warden's next words.

"Sure, I mean next week! Don't you go bughouse over good news! To-day's Friday—maybe we can get you off by Tuesday. Buck up, now!"

The warden laid a rough, kindly hand on the shoulder pressed against the barred door. Antony lifted his head.

"Thank you—Mahoney—you've been—very good to me," he said, speaking with difficulty.

The warden touched his cap.

"I'll come back later, and see about your railroad ticket, an'—an' everything. Sure, April is the grand month of the year to get out in!"

Alone once more, Antony involuntarily held out his hands to the sunlight. He felt cold and weak, he longed for that golden warmth to touch his groping fingers. Instead, they closed convulsively about the iron bars, which loomed to his terrified imaginings ten times stronger and more sinister than before.

He shut his eyes and tried to think what it was like to be free. He thought of galloping over the hills—the rushing, sweet keen air—wide reaches of sky, untrammeled vistas of blue—Margaret's eyes.

Ш

Four days later Antony walked out of the grim stone building and took the road leading to the station. A ticket to Maryland lay in the inside pocket of the new store suit that hung so loosely on his tall, gaunt figure. He had decided to go back to his old home, now in the hands of a tenant caretaker, until he could pull himself together and formulate plans for the future.

In the familiar scenes, the absence of people, he hoped to find readjustment. His thoughts carried no further than the big, rambling house, the low, sheltering hills.

Mahoney had seen to everything for him. He tightened his hold on the bag, sole relic of his other life, and quickened his steps.

The warden had promised to send his books. They had come from Margaret—a fresh lot every April—the only word from her. She had guessed well that he could not have endured letters. The books had been his solace—old favorites, like Plato and Horace; essays, poems, occasionally a novel. It had been nearly a year now since he had received any new ones.

Antony was passing the outskirts of the pine woods, just beyond which lay the station. He threw back his head to draw in more deeply the pungent tang of the trees. For the first time since setting out he noticed the sky, palely gray. He rubbed his eyes, dazed, bewildered. What were those dark streaks across it? They were bars—prison bars!

It must be his imagination playing tricks. Of course, it was his faulty vision, an illusion caused from constant staring at the bit of sky he had been able to see only through iron barriers. It was terrible that now, his first hour in the open, he could not see things as they actually were. Oh, well, he was tired, overwrought. A night's rest would make it all right.

He had not long to wait for the train. It came thundering and grinding to a reluctant halt at the small station. Antony shrank back in a sort of terror as the dizzying wheels ceased to turn. But for the porter's aid he could hardly have dragged himself up the steep steps into the Pullman car.

Once there, however, and established in his seat, some of his nervousness subsided. He began to feel stirrings in the roots of his consciousness of that other life—a life that had been so rich and vivid until the curtain swept down fifteen years ago, shutting him into blankness—darkness—despair.

He bought some magazines from the train boy, and began to turn their pages with trembling fingers. He must focus his attention on something that would divert his mind. But across the printed page slanting shadows fell fast, obscuring the words, hiding the pictures. He looked closer. Again

he saw the bars!

A sort of sick giddiness came over him. He closed his eyes and leaned his head back against the upholstered seat.

Noticing the white, worn face, a porter

bent over solicitously.

"Anything I can do, sir?"

Antony remembered that he had eaten nothing since early morning. No wonder his nerves were quivering. A little food would help him.

"Could you serve me something here?" he asked doubtfully. "Some hot broth, or

coffee?"

In a few moments he was sipping the steaming soup gratefully. His fastidious palate responded to the taste of better food than the coarse prison fare, which he had never eaten without shuddering. The hot coffee stimulated him. He drank it eagerly. Soon he would be all right; he could plan for his new life of freedom—could think things out.

He pushed away the small table in front of him, and leaned back, relaxed and comforted. The train was speeding through a stretch of flat, uninteresting country. He closed his eyes and, exhausted from the strain and effort of the day, fell into a light

slumber.

The jarring and grinding of the brakes aroused him as the train stopped in the outskirts of a city. It was sunset, and the clouds had broken into streaming banners of flaming gold and rose. He raised the window and leaned far out to view the radiant sky.

But even as he looked over the nearer tree tops, the horror came upon him. Horizontal shadows cut across the sunset colors, blotting out their beauty. He groaned. It must be an illusion—surely, surely this

thing could not last!

Shading his eyes with a shaking hand, he looked again. Yes, it was true, terribly true. Across the crimson sky ran black, unyielding, unforgetable bars!

He covered his eyes, and, quite without conscious volition, his head came crashing down on the small table in front of him.

A startled, solicitous porter helped the tall, white-faced gentleman to the dressing room, and insisted upon making up his berth, so that he might go at once to bed. Antony caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, and stood stock sill, gazing long at the reflection there.

He saw a face so worn and haggard that only the restless dark eyes made it seem alive. Even the eyes, he thought, no one would recognize, so somber, so unspeakably sad they seemed. Curiously he touched the streaks of white in his thick, closecropped hair.

The face that he remembered had been that of a man in the full flush of youth, sensitive to visions, sentient of life. Would Margaret know him? How could she?

He bent closer to the mirror, shuddering. Creeping lines came thronging from end to end, menacing, veiling the reflected image

in the glass. Bars!

He switched off the light in his berth, and began to undress with wild haste. Darkness—that was what he longed for. He could see nothing dreadful while it was dark. There would be rest for his eyes and nerves. The old porter was right. A long night's sleep would, must, make him see clearly.

Ah, yes, sleep—oblivion! This strange obsession would be gone in the morning. A new day would make everything different. To-morrow he would be himself, and he would be at home, safe, sheltered. What was it that his mother used to say, bending over him, when he awoke crying from a nightmare?

"Go to sleep, little lad, and dream about

Christmas!"

He drew the covers close about him and shut his eyes.

TV

GRAY dawn crept slantwise through the close-drawn shades. At first Antony felt rather than saw the light, waking from fitful, troubled slumber to a consciousness of some dread burden. For a long time he lay with shut eyelids, summoning courage and resolution to face the day. How much de-

pended upon what its light would bring to him! His release had come so unexpectedly, he had been forced to plan and act with such haste, after the inertia of those dragging years—no wonder it had turned his brain giddy and clouded his sight.

He used to be quick and strong. Margaret had named him "Antony the Impulsive." Surely, surely, he had not lost the very keynote of his personality! He needed clear eyes and steady hands, above all. Perhaps even yet his work—

The first line of a poem they had loved in that long ago springtime came to his

mind:

April comes laughing over the hill.

He used to think those were the words to the music of his picture.

The sleeping car began to stir with life. Antony looked at his watch. In an hour they would be at the station. He must

hurry

A few early sunbeams struggled between the drawn shades, and gathered on the white covers into a spot of brightness. He

stared at it, fascinated.

Then, like a spider's black web, the crowding lines came crawling across the pool of light. Unspeakable horror! Was day to seal his doom? Was he to be haunted forever by this symbol of his stolen youth, of the vanished years? The sky, the plains, the sunshine, whose beauty he had translated to the world—these were his rightful heritage—these were to have brought him strength for living. Was the whole world cursed?

He buried his head in the pillows, shutting out sight and sound, his hands clenched in agony. A calmness of despair swept over him, bringing, strangely, the semblance of

peace denied.

One last thing remained. He would go, as he had planned, to the place he had greatly loved—the sycamore wood that held his memories and his dreams. There he would try out this terrible obsession. If he could see the transparent water of the brook—the arching April sky over the tall, white-branched trees, as they used to appear—then his reason, his life, would be saved. The thousandth chance remained that in these cramped quarters, this narrow space, he could not escape the habit of years. Out in the open he would be clear and free, at last—out under the sky, with his memories of Margaret!

He began to dress rapidly, with a painful concentration on the business of the moment. At the porter's insistence he drank some black coffee, but he could force no food between his lips. However, he walked quite steadily down the steep train steps to the platform, leaving a generous tip and a kindly good-by with the old negro who stood peering anxiously after the tall, stooped figure in the ill-fitting clothes until it was lost in the distance.

Antony hired an automobile to take him the fifteen miles to his home, and had the curtains drawn so that the only light came through the small window at the back. He would shut out the sights and sounds of spring until he knew—until he knew!

At sight of the old gray house under the elms his heart contracted painfully. He shook off the thronging memories, dismissed the car, and went up the driveway as quickly as possible. The caretaker and tenant, Saunders, greeted him with the impassivity of that stolid farmer class who never evince surprise of any sort.

Antony was grateful for the man's calm acceptance of the situation. He was installed in his old room without question. Less than an hour after his arrival he slipped through the side gate unobserved, and started toward the woods that marked the boundaries between the two old estates.

He pulled his tweed cap low over his eyes, resolutely refusing to look at anything but the changing spots of ground before his hurrying footsteps. After the semidarkness of the automobile, and the dimness in which the house had been shrouded, he was dazzled by the strong light of late morning; but he took no heed of the perfect April day. He hastened on like one with bandaged eyes, who must reach an appointed spot.

Now the path was narrowing. Antony went more slowly between the two giant hickory trees of immemorial age on the brow of the hill. The rough bark of one

he touched wistfully in passing.

Now he was in the midst of the gleaming sycamores. How often he had imagined they were enchanted dryads, caught in mid flight! Yonder were the willows—oh, exquisite, lovely green of April! And the splashing murmur of the brook came to his ears distinctly on the quiet air.

He ran, stumbling, breathless, down the hillside, and, crouching beside the stream, plunged his hands into the cool, brown water that the sun was changing to molten gold. Slowly, slowly, he bent over until his lips almost touched the sparkling ripples. He could see his face reflected, but as if between bars—straight, inflexible rods crowding out the pale image. This, too, the translucent stream of his memory, was polluted, poisoned!

Flinging back his head, he looked up at the soft April sky that bent over the tree tops of swelling bud and bloom—a limitless stretch of blue. Even as his anguished eyes caught the sweep of it, silent as serpents the black lines glided over the azure, crossing, recrossing. All beauty, all

life, was forever barred to him!

With a cry of inarticulate despair, Antony buried his face on his arms. He must go away somewhere and end it all before Margaret could see him. There was nothing else now. He could not live under such a curse. Even she would not want him to do it. He had endured everything else, but this could not be endured. It was the end of all things!

v

Above his own heavy breathing Antony heard a rustle in the tangle of vines on the opposite hillside. Unmistakably it was the sound of footsteps, hurrying, eager. He cowered lower in the grass, hoping by some miracle to escape detection.

The steps came closer, stopped. A cry:

"Antony! Antony!"

It was Margaret's voice, Margaret's touch

on his shoulder. He must not look—he must not look! Still with arms outflung across his eyes, he stumbled to his knees, caught with one shaking hand at the hem of her skirt, and cried in a terrible voice:

"Leave me, leave me, Margaret! Let me remember your face as it was! Oh, let me have that at the last! I can't—I

can't-"

His voice rasped and broke. He strove to turn his head away, to get to his feet; but Margaret's hands—slender, unforgetable hands—were on his shaking, cold fingers, plucking them away from his tortured eyes, strongly, not to be resisted.

"Open your eyes, my dear, my dear!" she was saying, over and over. "Open your eyes! There is nothing to hurt you. Look

at me-look at me!"

Slowly his eyes unclosed—to seek, trembling, the cloudless depths so near him. No shadow darkened that beloved infinity of blue! Long, long he gazed. Depth on depth, unspeakably tender, calming him, blessing him!

Suddenly he tore his eyes away, and looked up fearfully into the April sky. It was stainless, perfect, unmarred by any blot or bar. He turned to the brook. It lay, a golden mirror, crystal-clear before

him

Then back to Margaret's eyes, and the horror lifted from his face as his searching gaze swept again those serene and steadfast wells of light. Here he had found healing, and hope, and heaven!

IN A WOODLAND GLADE AT DUSK

I CREPT beside a gliding stream, Where the moon, with silver hand, Had spread the gossamer of dream Out to fairyland.

Nymphs of shadow on a field Swept the dew with dancing feet, Swaying to a pipe concealed, Fantastical and fleet.

I peeped through willows, lonelier Than sunshine on an autumn plain, Held by the hours that never were, Or would not come again.

Oh, down that road to fairyland, So beckoning, so still, Nymphs of shadow, take my hand— Lead me where you will!

The Girl from Acton

HOW THE SOPHISTICATED GRAEMES, OF NEW YORK, PROTECTED YOUTHFUL INNOCENCE FRESH FROM A COUNTRY TOWN

By Reita Lambert

THEN she heard the apartment bell ring, Adele Graeme hurried across the living room to greet her guests, a line of anxiety creasing her forehead.

"I tried to reach you by phone before you started," she told Dane Clement and his wife, as they shook hands. Her voice " I've had dropped to a hoarse whisper. to change our plans, you see. Something has happened-"

"Somebody sick?"

" No, but-"

"Where's the corpse?" demanded Dane.

"Don't be funny, people," pleaded Mrs. "My dears, we have a visitor Graeme. in the house."

"Is that all?" expostulated Ethel Clement, and reached for her cigarette case.

"Got a match, Dane?"

"From Ohio," explained Mrs. Graeme. "No, you can't smoke to-night, Ethel. Didn't I tell you that she was from Ohio? The awful part is that it's so unexpected. You know how it is with your relatives-'Come and make us a visit some time!' Well, here she is!"

" Aha! Country cousin come to New York to see the sights-Grant's Tomb and the Statue of Liberty, eh?" cried Dane, a sleekly tailored young man with a facetious

turn of mind.

"Exactly," groaned Adele. "She's a cousin of Jim's. Her parents have gone to the Pacific Coast and inflicted little Eva

on me."

Ethel Clement shrugged off her evening coat and threw herself into a chair. Ethel was a personable young woman with the smoothly coifed hair, the smart gown, and the careful make-up that epitomized Fifth

"Is the ewe lamb weaned, my dear, or

do we take a bottle along on our picnics?"

she asked nonchalantly.

"No picnic to-night, children," an-nounced Adele firmly. "I couldn't neglect the child on her first night with us, and of course we couldn't take her along to a place like the Dice Box; so we dine at home, if you don't mind.'

"Dine at home!" reflected Dane grave-"Well, I'm always ready for a novelty, Del; but can Jim stand the shock?"

"If it doesn't occur too often," laughed Adele. "He's dressing, and will be with us in a minute."

"You poor girl," sympathized Ethel, "being called on to do a personally conducted tour at this time of the year! What ever will you do with the little hick?"

" Park her somewhere whenever possi-

ble," said Adele grimly.

"Gets dark early these days," suggested Dane helpfully. "You might set the clock a couple of hours ahead every night."

"Good idea, old boy!" approved his wife. "Why can't I smoke, Del?"

"For the same reason that you don't get anything to drink for your dinner," Mrs. Graeme explained. "You see, I recognize my responsibility as the guardian of innocence and virtue. You, too, Dane-watch your step!"

Dane Clement groaned.

"How old is the phenomenon, anyway?" "Something preposterous like eighteen or nineteen."

"Shades of the trundle bed!" sighed

Dane lugubriously.

From the hall the clang of the elevator reached the despondent trio as it carried Adele's neighbors streetward to join the city's hungry throng off for its evening meal at café and restaurant. Through the windows the sound of fretting taxis and

gay chatter seeped in to them. Adele's husband, neat prototype of a million others who people the subways morning and evening and crowd the business section of lower New York, entered simultaneously with the arrival of two other guests—Freddy Fordyce and Bob Secum. Freddy was a tall, lean young man, whose chief claim to popularity was a snug fortune and his willingness to spend, while Bob's genial and girthy vivacity made him the delight of his somewhat blasé coterie.

"How'll you have your flowers?" inquired Bob, shaking hands with his subdued hostess.

" Sh-h!"

Adele Graeme's finger flew to her lips, and into the sympathetic ears of the newcomers she poured the story of their unexpected invasion.

"That's what you get for having a guest room!" averred Freddy sadly. "It can't

be done in New York."

"No party?" wailed Bob dismally.
"Can't you put something in the kid's cock-tail to make her sleepy?"

"Cocktail!" repeated Adele. "Haven't I told you that the child has never been

out of Acton, Ohio?"

"Forget the booze for one night and act up nice, Bobby," commanded Jim Graeme sternly. "Where is the kid, Del?"

"Dressing," Adele told him.

"Flowered dimity and two starched petticoats," mused Ethel from the depths of her chair. "Better go and tie her sash, Del!"

II

THEATRICALLY a voice broke through the laughter that followed.

"Well, Cousin Del, here I am! May I

come in?"

Automatically the men rose from their sprawling positions. Stupidly their eyes

sprawling positions. Stupidly their eyes noted the approach of the Graemes' unwelcome visitor—an approach that was the flexible and effortless glide of a wind-blown

amber flame.

The girl's bobbed head had the glint of amber in every refractory wave. Billowing yellow georgette hung from the snug bodice of her frock in innumerable points, through which a pair of slender legs in the sheerest of silk stockings were plainly discernible. She came toward them with slender white arms hanging limply at her sides, red lips parted over firm little white

teeth, wide blue eyes glowing pleasantly above a tiptilted nose sprinkled with golden freckles.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting," she said sweetly. "I supposed dinner wouldn't be served before eight o'clock,

though."

The sextet gazed with dull incredulity at this apparition, and mechanically Adele made the introductions. With gracious cordiality the girl offered a soft little hand to each guest in turn, chatting easily as she did so.

"So nice to meet you, Mrs. Clement—and oh, Mr. Clement, too! No, my name's Angela—Angela Brent. Don't apologize—it's always that way with introductions. And Mr. Fordyce—is that right? It's such a picturesque name—like a hero in one of Scott Fitzgerald's books!" Her hand lingered in Freddy's as she made the comparison. "And Mr. Secum!"

Her eyelashes swept her cheek at the pressure of Bob's hand. Then she dissolved into an overstuffed chair, her feet tucked up, her slender bare arms encircling her knees, and smiled inclusively upon the

dazed assembly.

"How nice that you all happened to be coming to-night! How nice for me, I mean!"

"That's nothing to what it is for us," said Freddy heartily, recovering his poise, and drifting over to the cascading billows of yellow georgette.

"This your first visit to New York?" inquired Bob, following the ambitious

Freddy.

"My very first," admitted Angela, with captivating frankness. "Now you're going to ask me how I like your fair city. I feel it coming!"

"Well, how do you?" asked Dane Clement, moving as unostentatiously as possible

toward her chair.

"I'm beginning to think," said Angela, with a significant lift of prettily arched brows, "that I'm going to adore it!"

The voice of Mrs. Graeme's colored maid broke in upon them with the announcement that dinner was served. They drifted into the dining room, Angela's security made doubly sure by the determined proximity of Freddy Fordyce and Bob Secum. Tenderly they seated her, and, with a fervid desire to be of service, Freddy proffered a glass dish of olives. Angela selected one and held it aloft.

"Poor little thirsty thing-coming out

of a dish!" she gurgled.

A delighted laugh from the men inundated Adele's gasp, while Angela's mischievous glance swept her cousin's Volsteadian table.

"I always heard that New York was a great prohibition town," the country cousin averred dryly, and tackled her thick soup

with relish.

There followed a dismal silence, in which Angela turned confidingly to Bob Secum.

"You can't blame people for not drinking if they can't get good things to drink," she said gravely. "There's so much synthetic stuff around nowadays!"

Bob swallowed hard.

"That so?" he inquired gently.

" There's "Uh-hum!" nodded Angela. enough of it floating around Acton to launch a ship. Why, at the last country club dance, half our crowd was under the table by one o'clock!"

"Say!" said Freddy, with sudden anima-"What sort of a town is this Acton

place?"

"Oh, not so dusty," replied Angela nonchalantly. "Pretty wild-no home life to speak of. It's a treat to get into a real home atmosphere like Cousin Del's!"

The remark hung audibly over the table, and Adele Graeme concentrated hardily on her soup, while a dull flush mounted her cheeks. The patronizing little wretch but of course she was only showing off. Thus Mrs. Graeme found a ray of comfort.

"Look here, Miss Brent-" began Freddy, but Angela laid a supplicating lit-

tle hand on his arm.

"Call me Angela," she pleaded. "I just hate being 'missed'-don't you? I mean ' mistered.' "

"My name's Freddy," vouchsafed that

young man promptly.

"Hey, I'm scratching on the door!" broke in a voice at the girl's right. "I come when you call 'Bob,' and if you whistle I come just the same!"

"Bob and Freddy!" exulted Angela, clapping her hands. "Now yours, Mr.

Clement!"

"Dane," supplied that gentleman with

grateful readiness.

"How nice!" beamed Angela. "I may call him Dane, mayn't I, Mrs. Clement?"

"Help yourself, my dear - don't be backward!" replied Ethel Clement lightly, with a vengeful glance toward her hostess.

"Now I'm beginning to feel at home!" confided the country mouse warmly.

If there was any constraint in the atmosphere, the Graemes' visitor failed to detect it. Her bright chatter lent a melodious accompaniment to the business of eating. Her little white hands fluttered from Bob's coat sleeve to Freddy's, on her left, as she emphasized her remarks.

When coffee was brought, the clear young voice floated across to her startled cousin.

"I can't bear Turkish-or Russian, either," Angela was confiding to Freddy. As she spoke, she was delicately tapping the tip of a cigarette on a pink palm. "Give me good old Virginia every time, even if it's not so doggy!'

In silence Freddy proffered a lighted match, and Angela inhaled gratefully.

"I do hope you're not going to be shocked, Cousin Del," she said earnestly; "but what good is coffee without a smoke? I ask you!"

ш

WHEN Adele led the way back into the living room, four fatuously grinning men centered about the amber figure. Adele Graeme slipped down beside Ethel Clement on the sofa with a feeble smile.

" My dear, I-"

"Sh-h!" mocked Mrs. Clement, with a malicious grin. "Whatever you were going to say, remember your responsibility toward innocence and virtue!"

"Shut up!" commanded Adele sibilantly. "Such a pleasant evening, my dear—so homelike!" mused Ethel sweetly.

"Say!" whispered Jim Graeme, leaning over the back of the sofa. "When's the next train to Acton?"

He drifted carelessly toward the victrola. "Think it's time to set the clock ahead?"

asked Ethel gravely.

" More chance of the men setting it back!" replied Adele grimly, and pointed a significant forefinger to the trio of dinner coats clustered about a tousled amber head.

"Little Goldilocks and the three bears, mused Ethel, as the opening chords of a fox trot filtered through the doors of the victrola.

"Oh, goody!" cried Angela. dance. Come along, Freddy, and I'll teach you the snake walk. Yes, you next, Dane -and after Dane comes Bobby!"

To the dazed senses of Adele Graeme, the evening passed in a kaleidoscopic series

of pictures - pictures of Angela whirling through the mazes of some outlandish dance in the arms of Freddy or Bob or Dane Clement-Angela curled into a fluffy yellow ball in a corner of the sofa, reading a quiescent masculine palm-Angela demonstrating her flexibility by a series of acrobatic stunts on the rug.

At eleven, the irate Ethel Clement, watching with alarm the slow but certain moral dissolution of her husband, pleaded a headache and dragged him away. At a significant glance from their hostess, Freddy

and Bob followed.

"It's been such a nice evening," Angela told Adele, when the others were gone. " Having dinner at home like this and dancing to the phonograph, too! So quaint and homy, you know-with everybody leaving at eleven!"

"I'm glad you liked it," said Adele, thinking ruefully of the relinquished party at the Dice Box. "We'll take you out some night to see something of the town,

if you'd like."

"Oh, you mustn't worry about entertaining me, Del dear," Angela said solicitously. " All your nice men have dated me up for that sort of thing, you know. Cousin Jim's taking me to the Blue Kitten in the village for tea to-morrow - aren't you, Jimmy?"

"Sure am!" admitted Jim heartily, with

a sidelong glance at his wife.

Angela strolled toward the door, paused halfway, and turned.

"Say, Cousin Del, which of those men has got it to burn?"

"Got it-to burn?"

"Yes-money, you know."

"Oh!" exclaimed Adele dryly. "Why, if it's their financial status you're interested in, my dear, you'd better concentrate on

Freddy Fordyce."

"Freddy!" repeated Angela thoughtful-"He's not such a dumbdora, is he? Maybe, when you got to know him, you'd find somebody home, eh? A little slow, but he has possibilities." She tripped blithely to the door and turned a laughing little face back to them again. " Mother'd have hysterics if she could see me going to bed-at eleven!"

When the door had closed on that glinting amber head, Adele turned to her husband; but Jim Graeme was solemnly executing a war dance on the tapestry brick

hearth.

"Voluptuous Velma!" he whispered ecstatically. "Peaches and cream! What's the matter with the country cousin? She's-"

" Jim Graeme, if you take that girl to

the Blue Kitten-"

"Got to entertain my lil cousin, haven't I?" said Jim innocently. "Say, where were the starched petticoats you were talking about?"

"How could I guess what she was like?" defended Adele sharply. "All I knew about her was that she'd never been out

of Acton."

" Mamma!" wailed Jim. "I want to go to Acton!"

"Shut up, Jim! She'll hear you."

Mr. Graeme grinned at the disconcerted

face of his wife.

"New York's the biggest boob town in the world. Folks in this place still think you can hunt buffalo in Chicago. Just because that girl came from a little place you never heard of, you jumped to the conclusion that she must have corn husks sticking to her shoes. Well, this ought to teach you a lesson!"

"It does," said Adele shortly. leave the entertaining of little Angela to me. You're safe enough with a New York flapper, but lay off that Acton belle!"

"I'm dated up," averred Jim blithely. "So are Freddy and Bob and Dane Clement. Say, Del, those lads fell so hard they shook the Woolworth Building!"

"Well, remember she's related to you," reminded Adele, and slammed the door of

her bedroom.

IV

IF Mrs. Graeme had harbored the idea that, as hostess, it would devolve upon her to entertain her visitor, she soon relinquished it. The Graeme telephone, always a useful and busy instrument, became, after that eventful night, a means of communication mainly for one Angela Brent, of Acton, Ohio. The transmitter vibrated with the name, as masculine voices cried in the wilderness of Mr. Bell's invention for Angela.

Angela, sitting cross-legged on a chair, of a morning, in a frothy and scanty negligee, the sheen of her white knees visible above rolled stockings, accepted and declined invitations with impartial sweetness. She assured her cousin that she was so glad not to be a bother. It was such a bore entertaining people, she declared, and she was having such a nice time with Bobby and Freddy, and that dear thing, Dane Clement—she hoped Dane's wife didn't mind. On the whole, she treated Adele—who was still on the pleasant side of thirty,—with the gentle condescension accorded a shrinking little "home body"; for Angela had taken that first disastrous evening as an authentic example of the Graemes' habitual existence.

Adele was called to the telephone one afternoon to be greeted by the doleful voice

of Ethel Clement.

"The next number on the program," Ethel announced, "will be 'Oh, Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night?' rendered by Mrs. Dane Clement."

"Ethel! What-"

"If you don't call off that man-eating vamp of yours, I shall call out the reserves," said Mrs. Clement firmly.

"Do you mean she's out with Dane

again?"

"Yet!" corrected Ethel. "She's an accommodating little soul. Do you see any-

thing of Jim any more?"

"Only when she's got something better to pick on," admitted Adele wrathfully. All the pent up resentment in the breast of Angela's hostess found vent in her friend's sympathetic ear. "We've got to do something, Ethel, to show that kid her place. She treats me as if I were a mid-Victorian relic. All the goody-goody stuff we pulled for her benefit that first night she took for the real thing, and I've never been able to live it down. She patronizes me! And as for this town-my dear, if you show her the Woolworth Tower, it reminds her of the Farmers' Trust Building at home. If you take her to tea at a hotel, she tells you that you ought to see the Venetian Room at the Acton House. Showing that girl New York is like taking Don Juan through a convent, and expecting him to get a thrill!"

"She needs to have the wind taken out of her sails," Ethel broke in sympathetically. "The men have ruined her. But what

can you do?"

"Give her a real party, and some competition," replied Adele. "That's just what I'm going to do. Dump her down in a place like the Dice Box and play her against a couple of Bob Secum's little chorus things, and she'd soon wish she was back in her precious home town!"

"You're a smart girl Del!" approved Ethel.

"I'm going to get Bob on the phone, and I'll tell him to bring a couple of babies from the front row," announced Adele grimly. "Not a word to Jim! I'm just a hospitable hostess giving a little party for my guest."

"I get you, my dear. Any tactics to

preserve the home!"

"Home!" scoffed Adele. "Husbands, you mean. Get out your doggiest frock—this party's going to be wild!"

When Angela appeared for dinner that evening, her face, cuddled in furs, glowing like a succulent autumn apple, she was all animation.

"Such a nice time with dear old Dane!"

she confided.

"Where did you have tea, dear?"

"Coffee," corrected Angela sweetly. "On the Excelsior Roof. Cunning place—good orchestra, too, almost as peppy as the Atlanta Four. They play at the country club at home, you know."

Adele interrupted this nonchalant reference to one of New York's most glittering

show places.

"Better go and rest up, child. We're

having a little blow-out to-night."

"Oh, what fun!" rejoiced Angela. "But I don't need to rest up. I'll just write a few letters and freshen up with a mud pack."

And with a frolicsome flirt of skirt and

furs she was gone.

V

THE Dice Box lies behind the arras of secrecy which Broadway discreetly hangs before her more daring resorts. It is a place for the initiated. To achieve entry there one must pass through the sophisticated labyrinths of the Great White Way with ears attuned to the city's secret code. It boasts the jazziest of all negro jazz bands, the most daring cabaret, the most risqué wit, the most seductive lighting arrangements, the most lenient proprietor, and the most exorbitant prices of any like place in town.

At half past eleven that evening, Adele Graeme's party trooped gayly through the gilded portals of the Dice Box and followed a pompous gentleman in brass buttons to a "ring side" table. Wrapped in an evening cloak of pale green velvet and chinchilla, with her vivid face haloed by the refractory waves of her auburn hair,

Angela's passage through the closely packed tables was followed by unconcealed glances of admiration from many a world-weary masculine eve.

Genial Bob Secum, already seated at the table reserved for the Graeme party, noted their approach and spoke hurriedly to his

two companions.

"Here's the crowd, girlies! Watch your steps, and remember that the young lady this party is for is from Hicksville. Be good little birdies, and papa will love you!"

The dependable Bob had received Mrs. Graeme's request with elation. A party for dear little Angela, eh? And she wanted to see some real chorus ladies? Well, bless her heart, so she should!

Of course Molly and Dolly, second and third from the end in the front row, must be put through a preliminary hush procedure-properly expurgated, as it were, for the occasion.

"No booze, sweeties," Bob had told them; "and don't wear something that be-

gins at the equator."

Here, therefore, were Molly and Dolly, demure in simple frocks suitable for the sub-deb daughters of a circumspect banker

-and not entirely happy.
"Hello, everybody!" greeted Angela gayly, advancing upon the trio like an exuberant princess at the head of her retinue. She slipped into the chair Freddy held for her, and shrugged off the enveloping folds of her wrap. "O-oh! What a cute place! Aren't you glad I had a party, Bobby?"

Bobby was momentarily bereft of speech. Like the others in Mrs. Graeme's party, he was gazing in startled wonderment upon the generous expanse of white throat and shoulders emerging from the green wrap.

Angela's costume had not been subject to the prohibitions of the censor. It was an economical affair of flimsy black crêpe, its scanty bodice, which tapered into nothingness at the back, held in place by two narrow bands of jet beads over the shoulders. Molly or Dolly might have worn the daring frock with a conscious air of audacity; but the girl from Acton beamed brightly upon her party, entirely innocent of the stir she had created.

"Good music, even if the tunes are a little passé," she approved. "Well, Freddy, you going to let this Frisco go to

waste?"

She swung off in the arms of the dazzled Mr. Fordyce, and the others followed suit;

but Adele gripped Bob Secum's arm and

pulled him down beside her.

"What boarding school have you been robbing?" she demanded tersely. "Don't tell me those little Elsies came out of the Summer Garden!"

"Sure they did!" said the aggrieved Bobby. "What's the matter with 'em?"

"Man! Man! Their clothes-and are

they dumb?"

"Well, I put them wise. I didn't think you'd want your cousin to-well, I drilled them, and they're acting up."

Mrs. Graeme groaned.

"Well, liven them up, Bob, my boy, with a little bit of unrighteousness.'

"I haven't got any booze."

"Not even your flask?"

"Course not!" said the dazed Bob. thought you said-"

But the frustrated Adele cut him short

with a despairing groan.

"And we can't get a thing here since that last raid!"

The dancers flooded back. strolled toward the table, with a distinguished-looking personage in full evening regalia following in tow.

"Oh, people!" she exclaimed. found something. Let me present Mr. De Garmo-he's from Acton, too-and what do you think? He's proprietor of this cute place-aren't you, Jack?"

The distinguished Mr. De Garmo gave

them an inclusive bow.

Jack," Angela admonished. "Now, Jack," Angela admonished, grasping the proprietor's coat lapels and shaking him gently, "this is my party, and you know your cue. Go down cellar like a good boy-and no watered Chianti, mind vou!"

Mr. De Garmo's hesitation was shortlived. He left them, grinning broadly, and presently a waiter appeared bearing a sil-

ver coffeepot and small cups.

"I know you're going to be shocked, Cousin Del," said Angela slyly; "but just this once a little joy water isn't going to hurt you. Oh, it's the real stuff!" She sipped from her coffee cup, and regarded them over its brim with sparkling eyes. "Wasn't it nice that I happened to find

"Are you sure the mayor isn't one of your old playmates, my dear?" inquired

Ethel Clement dryly.

"Shouldn't be surprised," countered Angela. "Didn't you ever hear that all the important positions in New York were held by folks from other towns? Well, it's so."

VI

Perfectly poised, vividly lovely in the black frock, impartially cordial, the girl from Acton dominated the table, smiled sweetly upon the chilly faces of Molly and Dolly from the Summer Garden, and chattered incessantly. The men's eyes clung with fatuous delight to her flushed face, and pleaded ardently for dances. The supple black figure was on the floor at the first strains of every dance, an eye-compelling figure even among the lavishly gowned frequenters of the Dice Box.

"Turkish coffee!" she gurgled, slipping breathlessly into her chair at the conclusion of a dance. "What use is Turkish coffee without a dash of rose water? Who'll have a dipped cigarette? I dipped 'em myself, and they've got a nice kick, people!"

A peremptory blare of music commanded their silence, and the personable young proprietor walked into the middle of the dance floor. Dice Box devotees leaned forward

expectantly as he spoke.

"Friends," began Mr. De Garmo, "as many of you already know, it is the custom of the Dice Box to confer a reward for the best dancing of the evening upon one of our patrons, the reward to be selected by the recipient. I take pleasure in presenting my choice to-night, but of course that choice depends upon your approval."

Graciously he stepped to the Graemes' table and offered his arm to the sparkling Angela. She followed him to the center of the floor, to the clatter of innumerable little wooden mallets, supplied by the manage-

ment for purposes of applause.

"Atta boy!"

"Give it to the little cutie!"

"Good work, Jack!"

" Make her dance for us!"

Mr. De Garmo raised an austere hand for silence, while Angela clung to the other like a captive wood nymph.

"I am glad to have your approval," he said. "If there are any other claimants—"

- "Sure there ain't!" roared a hearty male voice, and the smoke-filled room took up the echo.
- "It is customary," Mr. De Garmo announced, turning to Angela, but speaking so that every one could hear, "for the winner of this prize to favor us with a short solo dance."

From their table, the Graeme party had watched this astonishing scene in stupefied silence. They now saw a whispered conference take place between the proprietor and their young visitor. They heard the former announce that the young woman professed ignorance of fancy dances, but was sporting enough to accept the regulations, and would do her best. They heard the musicians strike the first chords of a waltz, and saw the lithe black figure whirling to the seductive syncopations.

Abortive remarks hung over Mrs. Grae-

me's table!

"Say, Bob Secum! You wait till I get you alone! If I don't pull your teeth!" murmured the sibilant voice of Molly in Bob's ear.

"From Hicksville, eh?" hissed Dolly.
"What you s'pose would happen if she'd come from Second Avenoo?"

"Makin' us doll up like the Salvation

rmv!"

Luckily, Bob's eyes were on those whirling, silk-swathed legs in the center of the dance floor.

"The cute little devil!" breathed Jim

Graeme appreciatively.

"How would you like your coffin lined, my dear?" Ethel Clement gently inquired

of the gloomy Adele.

The clatter of the energetic little mallets spared Adele the painful necessity of a reply. Angela had dropped to the floor in a sweeping curtsy, and an instant later she was laughing down into their strained faces.

"That was a funny number!" she gurgled. "Making me dance! Wasn't it quaint? Such a funny custom! I didn't know it was done any more. What, are we going—so early? A closing law! Not really?"

She faced them in aggrieved wonder as

Freddy Fordyce held her wrap.

"Do you actually mean that they make you stop dancing at one o'clock in this town! The law? Why, the country club dances at home never break up till it's time for breakfast! Well, wait till I get my prize."

In the foyer she left them for a moment while the men retrieved their coats, and rejoined them with her cloak bulging.

"I know how to choose a prize," she

told them.

"Let me carry it—whatever it is," urged Freddy.

But Angela shook her head emphatically, and they drifted toward the door.

Now the Dice Box had contrived, by devious methods practiced by the initiated, to insure itself partial immunity as far as its anti-Volstead activities were concerned; but it was customary for a duet of blue-coats to station themselves outside the canopied entrance to the midnight rendezvous to thwart the efforts of any ambitious reveler attempting to transport illicit liquid. True, many a coat pocket and beaded bag had carried off evidence of Mr. De Garmo's cleverness, but the feat needed adroitness.

When Angela emerged from the brilliantly lighted doorway, a sharp gust of December wind whipped playfully at her cloak, flung it back, and displayed to the lethargic gaze of the law's minion a raffiacovered bottle. Unfortunately, Jim and Adele Graeme were engaged in hailing a taxi at the moment. They were conscious of a crash on the sidewalk, and a whispered warning from Angela—which escaped the ears of the concerned Jim, who stooped mechanically and picked up the shattered and dripping bottle.

"What you got there? Ah, you would, would you? Well, you come along with

me now!"

VII

DIMLY, Jim Graeme later recalled the spectacle of a pale green and chinchilla evening coat disappearing into the taxi he had hailed, followed by Freddy Fordyce. He dimly remembered its speedy departure, and the mysterious eclipse of the other members of the party. The law had him firmly by the arms, and a gentle pressure was urging him forward, to the tune of Adele's protests.

"But the stuff's not mine!" protested Jim. "I never saw the bottle before!"

"Sure you didn't, bo!" chuckled the law.
"Where's Angela, Jim? They've all gone!"

"Freddy 'll take her home," said Jim shortly. "There's nothing for us to do but to go along with this dumb-bell. I'll fix

things at the station house."

Thus the optimistic Jim, with a heartfelt prayer of thanks that Broadway was partially deserted. But his optimism was quickly dissipated a few moments later when he faced a somnolent and chronically incredulous representative of justice.

The patrolman's statement was irrefut-

able. Money was required to insure the appearance of the culprit at court the next morning, and the not entirely altruistic Mr. De Garmo had practically emptied the pockets of Angela's host, for the wine had been charged on Jim's bill. Through the bleak hours between midnight and dawn the chilly and unsympathetic environs of the station house lodged Angela's cousins, while telephones jingled and bail was finally secured.

At five—the hour when a bland sun was making its ostentatious ascent over the hills beyond Acton, Ohio—Jim climbed gloomily from a taxi and assisted his shivering wife up three pairs of stairs, after ascertaining that the elevator boy was asleep in the basement. They entered their apartment

in silence.

"And," Adele said grimly, "I suppose she's snugly in bed getting her beauty

sleep!"

"Well, let her sleep!" advised Jim glumly, but his wife was making determinedly for the guest room.

"After this? I guess not. I've been made the goat once too often. Why, Jim, she's not here!"

"Not there?"

Heavy-eyed, Mr. Graeme joined his wife and surveyed the neatly spread bed.

"But here's a note!" cried Adele, and tore feverishly at a pale pink envelope. "She's gone!"

"Gone?" cried Jim. "Read it—quick!"
"With Freddy Fordyce! They were married in Jersey, and are on their way—"

"To Acton!" shouted Jim.

"She says"—Adele spoke grimly without lifting her eyes from the letter—"she's sorry about to-night, but that you shouldn't have picked up the bottle. She dropped it because that destroys the evidence. She says everybody in Acton knows that!"

In a spasm of uncontrolled mirth, Jim

Graeme doubled up on the bed.

"If ever I entertain another country cousin of yours—" began Adele furiously.

"And she copped Freddy and his money!" roared Jim.

"If ever—" repeated Adele, her voice rising shrilly.

"Look out, Del!" cried Jim. "What's that in your hair?"

Adele flung a hand up.

"Hayseed!" roared her husband.

This time Mrs. Graeme added her own hysterical mirth to his.

The Bathurst Complex

THE STORY OF A NEW ENGLAND ARISTOCRAT WHO HATED
PUBLICITY AND MADE OF HIS SECRET TRAGEDY
A BAFFLING MYSTERY

By Wyndham Martyn

Author of "The Mystery of Anthony Trent," "The Secret of the Silver Car," etc.

HONA KING, a young lecturer at Radcliffe College, is walking along a quiet street in the Back Bay district of Boston, in the evening, when she is importuned by a frightened woman to accompany her into a near-by house, the residence of Curtis Bathurst, a millionaire. Inside the house Miss King discovers a man lying dead, with his throat cut. She screams, and a policeman and another man rush in, to find her cowering beside the body. The officer arrests her, but his companion attacks and overpowers him, and releases the prisoner. They flee, leaving the policeman bound and gagged.

the policeman bound and gagged.

Rhona's rescuer reveals himself as John Southard, lecturer on modern literature at Harvard, and an amateur criminologist. He takes her to her rooms in Cambridge, and promises to call

on her the next day.

In the morning, Finneran, the policeman, turns up at headquarters in a drunken condition, tells a wild tale of murder and kidnaping, and resigns from the force. Professor Southard attempts to convince the commissioner that a murder has actually occurred, but he is laughed at, for the house has been searched, and no sign of a crime could be found. Southard persists in his story, but he does not wish to bring in Miss King as a witness, and he cannot get Finneran's testimony, for the policeman is accidentally killed. Commissioner Lawrence, who is a personal friend of Southard's, sadly advises him to see a brain specialist.

V

THAT Rhona looked forward to Southard's visit with a keenness of anticipation rarely experienced before was something, she felt dimly, that she should be ashamed to confess. She ought, she told herself, to be still too much frightened by what she had seen on the previous night, and by the thought of its possible outcome, to spend so much time in making her room look attractive and herself presentable. She regretted that her room, almost wholly a study, lacked the pretty things which made the apartments of other girls so charming.

Southard, when he came in, looked about him with interest. On the previous evening he had been too much excited to take

stock of it.

"What a relief," he cried, sinking into a chair, "to find one room free from heroic groups of the athletic young, and without a screaming mass of polychromatic pillows!" "Will you have tea?" she asked rather timidly.

One of her few male visitors, when brought in to see her by his sister, had told her, when she asked him this same question, that red-blooded men never drank tea in the afternoon. He had that splendid air of world knowledge which sits so easily on sophomoric shoulders.

"It will save my reason," Southard an-

swered gratefully.

As he sipped it, he observed Rhona closely. She had kept her hair in the style that suited her so admirably, and the severe shirt waist she usually wore had given place to a pretty blouse, which served to soften her appearance. Southard could not guess the astonishment she had created at her classes that morning, or how the male members of the faculty were puzzled at what seemed an incredible change in her.

"I always like a cup of tea at this time," she said, at a loss conversationally.

"It's a civilized habit," he remarked.

"It will survive even the illustrated jests

of our humorists. I laughed at it in my salad days, but I was speedily converted. Did you ever hear of the perplexity of an English family living up in the Lake District, when they received a present of their first pound of tea, which was then coming to be a modish drink among the fashionables at Bath?"

Rhona shook her head. "Tell me," she invited.

"They had no idea how to prepare it. After consultation, their cook boiled it till she thought it was tender. Then she poured away the juice, and served the boiled leaves in a lordly dish. They tried in vain to eat the stuff, and finally condemned the tea habit as immoral."

He turned to her, still with a cheerfulness that kept her spirits from drooping.

"Now let's come down to business," he "Where do you think I spent the morning?"

"With your cousin, the lawyer?"

Southard shook his head.

"Charles is on pleasure bent, and failed me. I was trying hard to convince Stafford Lawrence, the police commissioner, that I had seen a murdered man in Beacon Street."

"Trying to convince him? Surely that

wasn't hard!" "You shall judge. I'll tell you the whole story."

"Why didn't you mention me?" she de-

manded, when he had finished.

"What was the use? If he wouldn't believe two men, I thought it just as well to leave you out of it for a time. What do you suggest I should do?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to see Finner-

an," she said hesitatingly.

"That's my idea, too," Southard responded. "He's probably drunk still, and apt to be strenuous, but it's the only way. We can't leave the thing uncleared. I shall go with him to Lawrence, and he will be forced to make an investigation. If I can and may, I'll report to you here tomorrow. By the way, what are you doing to-night?"

"Nothing," she answered, thereby sacrificing certain planned hours of study.

"Then you can come to the Symphony," he said. "They are doing Brahms's 'Second Symphony,' which I never miss, and there's a much heralded singer who is to sing a group of Ravel's songs. Are you fond of music?"

"I know too little of it," she sighed. "I'm afraid I've been too much inclined to shut myself in here. I once taught elementary counterpoint, though," she added.
"I shall call in good time," he said,

making his farewell.

As soon as he had gone, Rhona made another inspection of her wardrobe. Then, for what seemed to her a shamelessly long period, she stared at herself in the mirror, wondering if the friendly envy that certain of her acquaintances had evinced over her complexion was justified by facts.

After his morning classes on the day that followed the Symphony concert, Southard, as had been agreed upon by his fellow witness, called upon the commissioner of police at his office.

Lawrence looked at his visitor anxiously. He hoped there would be no more nonsense about midnight crimes. He was reading some newspaper clippings which adversely criticized the morale of the force, and he was in no mood for practical jokes.

Southard's opening sentence did not

promise him relief.

"You pooh-poohed what I had to say at the club," the younger man commenced equably; "but you can't do that here. Ex officio you must give me attention. This visit is purely on business."

Stafford Lawrence gazed wearily at the

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"First of all, a complaint. Last night I went to the sergeant at the desk of the police station in Finneran's district, and asked for his address. The man refused to give it."

"Finneran is his cousin," the commissioner said. "He's naturally a little bit sore at the business, and he took you for a newspaper man hunting up a story.

What did you want it for?"

"To get him to corroborate a statement that you must believe. For the moment we will not discuss the murder."

"That cheers me," Lawrence said iron-ically. "I shall have a better night."

Southard ignored his tone.

"If Finneran admits I was the man who assaulted him and tied him up in the Bathurst linen closet, will you agree to investigate further?"

"If," the commissioner said, placing a strong emphasis on the conjunction-"if he admits that you are one of three men, I will certainly place my services at your disposal."

"Three men?" Southard exclaimed,

puzzled.

"There were three ruffians concerned in the attack, to say nothing of his lady friend."

The dragging in of these other assailants had no doubt been Finneran's excuse for being overpowered. To one so physically combative and ready it would be humiliating to confess that the arts of one man had overthrown him. The other two, Southard felt sure, were figments of the imagination, and would resolve themselves simply into himself.

"That's all I want," he replied. "Now, if you will have the man brought here, I

think I can convince you."

"I'm afraid I can't do that," Lawrence

"Does that mean you won't?" Southard snapped.

"Yes and no," came the exasperating

answer.

"I'll get him, then, without your assistance." Southard was growing incensed at the crass obstinacy of a man in a high place. "I'm going to prove that you and your men are hopelessly incompetent. I'm afraid it won't help you much, Lawrence, but I'm driven to it."

"That's all right," the commissioner returned with a tolerant air. "I think I know a couple of your friends who would be of assistance in your search."

"What do you mean?" Southard asked

him bluntly.

"The murdered gentleman and the lady

who expired of heart disease."

"I think I might suggest your brother as a fit person for you to see," Southard said shortly.

"My dear boy, don't you still read the morning papers? Haven't you seen on all the front pages that Finneran was killed

last night in Connecticut?"

For a moment Southard thought that here was another move in the same crime. There might, after all, have been three men who removed Finneran. Until now he had supposed that the policeman had worked himself loose, and in his search of the house had come upon the bottle that had brought disaster to him. What more likely than that he had in reality been released by the mysterious criminals and later put out of the way?

But the commissioner had read his

thoughts in part.

"No," he said with gentle satire, "I'm afraid it's none of those Sherlock Holmes complications. When Finneran was dismissed, there was some money due him. He told his cousin he was going to try the New York force, and took the train there. At New Haven he left the train and took the trolley, for reasons unknown, back to Branford. There, on the village green, he insulted an ironworker at the mills near by, and struck the fellow when he wouldn't This ironworker has a good reputation for sobriety, and witnesses prove the assault upon him was of a brutal character. He hit Finneran only once, but that was a sledge hammer blow on the temple, and it killed him instantly. You'll see that I can't very well get poor Finneran to substantiate what you say; and as you're no Aneas to make subterranean expeditions, we'd better let his ashes rest in peace."

Southard thought a moment.

"Very well! If you won't do anything, I'll go and call on Curtis Bathurst."

"He'll be singularly charmed," Lawrence returned. "I know of few people more tenacious of family traditions, and it will be an agreeable change to find that you insist upon peopling his house with cutthroats."

As Southard was leaving, the commissioner called out:

"There is one thing I beg-don't let him suppose I sent you."

VI

CURTIS BATHURST was a man of middle age whose family had long been a wealthy one. His father had been one of those old merchants at whose tables many distinguished visitors had regaled themselves as they passed through New England's capi-Advantageous marriages had helped the family fortunes, and his son Curtis was among the wealthiest of the Back Bay set. He was clean-shaven, and his aquiline features more often betrayed a faint character of superciliousness than any air of amiability; and yet, among those who knew him intimately, he had the reputation of being a friend in need and generous to a marked degree.

He spent not more than ten weeks of every year in his Beacon Street mansion, but while there he entertained largely. The winter he passed at Bracondale, his great estate near Aiken, in South Carolina. He was related to enough of the English aristocracy by marriage to find himself quite at home in London whenever he chose to open his house in Brock Street.

None of his residences had the traditions that endeared Beacon Street to him, and there was always a sense of coming to his real home when he returned to it each spring. Ordinarily he stepped from his carriage into a mansion where perfect service by a trained staff prevented the sight or sound of the domestic machinery.

In this particular year he had nerved himself for a short period of unpleasantness. Owing to the sudden illness of Larry Bathurst, a Harvard junior, Mr. and Mrs. Bathurst and their daughter had returned from Aiken on such short notice that the servants could not get to Boston in time to prepare for their arrival. They were to take up their abode at a conveniently near hotel until the house could be made habitable.

Within half an hour of depositing his baggage at the hotel, Curtis Bathurst walked over to his residence, and found it in possession of the police. His furious outburst of indignation almost cowed Stafford Lawrence.

Had the officers been hot upon the track of burglars, he would have lost his faith in burglar alarms and gained confidence in the force; but his nature was stirred to its depths when he learned from the commissioner that they were seeking for a blood-stained corpse in his own bedroom, and for signs of a policeman's occupation in his wife's linen closets. So much he said with the bitterest scorn.

In every immaculate chamber there were signs of the ferocious energy with which Lawrence's men had prosecuted their search. The only reassuring thing about the whole miserable business was the absence of newspaper men. Few people hated the activities of the ubiquitous reporter with such concentrated loathing as Curtis Bathurst. He deplored the fact that their energies had given the world the erroneous idea that all Americans basked happily in the fierce light that beat about newspaper notoriety.

He was still fuming at the indignity to which his house had been put, and voicing his utter disapproval to all who might hear, when he was interrupted by the news that John Southard desired to see him. He had not yet been informed of Southard's insistence on sharing the discovery of the crime with the dead policeman.

Southard was shown up to the library, where he had but lately been in such strange company under such unusual conditions. Bathurst rarely saw any but his intimates here. The confusion that still reigned in his other rooms was the reason that Southard won to this sanctum.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Bathurst," Southard began, "that your home-coming this year had unpleasant features connected with it."

"I don't know that I quite understand you," his host returned.

"This wretched murder, I mean," Southard explained.

He knew from the flash of anger in the elder man's eyes that the subject brought no pleasing reflections.

"Is it possible," said Bathurst bitingly, "that Commissioner Lawrence has had the grotesquely poor taste to retail to all and sundry what is supposed to have happened here?"

"Nothing of the kind," Southard reassured him. "In fact, he refuses to believe that such a thing can have taken place."

"Then may I ask how it is you know?"
"I saw it," Southard answered.

He was not prepared to find that the news would prove so agitating to the owner of the house. Bathurst compressed his thin lips and stared at the speaker almost with venom. He breathed hard.

"I was here," Southard said simply.
"This chair that I'm sitting on was where
Finneran sat and chewed a quid of tobacco
while he deliberated on what to do." He
pointed in the direction of the bedroom.
"And that's where I saw the man lying
dead."

"I insist on knowing exactly what you mean," Bathurst demanded.

"I came for no other reason," Southard responded.

He told, in part, what he had seen. There seemed, as yet, to be no reason for dragging in Rhona's name. The instinctive desire which exists in most men to keep women's names from police proceedings stayed him. There would be time enough for that later.

When Southard finished, Bathurst's comment seemed puerile in the extreme.

"You had no right to enter my house. The fact that I have met you at certain social functions, and that you once came

to a dance here, or a reception, or whatever it was, gave you no right to come here

stealthily by night."

"I thought I had explained," Southard said patiently, "that I came in here because a policeman declared he heard cries coming from this room, and I felt it my duty to lend what aid I could. We found on your bed a man with his throat cut."

"Where is this police officer now?"

Bathurst demanded.

"I have just learned that he is dead." Bathurst looked at him almost with an

expression of triumph.

"So we cannot hope to learn from him any further particulars, or for what singular reason he may have accepted your assistance!"

Again Southard felt that he was met with asinine disbelief. Lawrence first, now Bathurst! It was incredible. No wonder crimes remained mysteries, if others adopted such an attitude toward those who were honest in their assertions!

"You can hardly refuse to take my sworn word?" he said interrogatively.

"Absolutely and finally," Bathurst re-

turned quickly.

Southard resolutely kept back his natural indignation. Bathurst was, he supposed—wishing that he could have more sympathy for the rich man's feeling—inordinately angry that his residence should suddenly prove to be a mine for special story men, a target at which cameras would be aimed, a spot pointed out to those visitors from remote districts who were guided through in "rubberneck" automobiles.

"Will you tell me," he asked, "why in Heaven's name I should take all this trouble, if I did not know I was right?"

Bathurst waved his hand magisterially. "There are a number of conjectural reasons, since you will have it. You might come here to intimidate me and get money. Blackmail is the term used. You might have been using my house for the vulgar purposes of an assignation, when you were surprised by this dead officer and compelled to overpower him."

Southard was incensed.

"That's wholly illogical and extremely offensive, Mr. Bathurst. If I made my escape, as you suppose, I should want to hush it up and not to tell you about it. As to blackmail, the idea is absurd. You must know, since you can't help knowing, that my father is a wealthy man, and that I

have independent means and am not likely to need your money. It's damnable insinuation!" he said hotly, not able to control his anger. "I could wish—"

He broke off. Nothing was to be gained by declaring his desire to chastise the cool,

debonair man before him.

"And what do you wish?" Bathurst asked genially.

"That you would examine the thing impartially, instead of raising objections, just

as Lawrence did."

"I have done so," Bathurst retorted.

"I have decided that your story is so farcically improbable as to be worthless. Since you seem so agitated, permit me to relieve you of the charge of blackmail, or of using my house for assignations. I do not think you would do anything you rightly call asinine."

"I'm glad," said Southard, "to learn by inference that you admit I was actually

here."

"I don't!" Bathurst cried with a show of heat. "I don't believe a word of your story. My common sense suggests that you are suffering from some form of hallucination. You did not enter this house. No one entered it, as the police have proved. The caretaker has convinced me that nothing was touched, except what the police were compelled to examine in their investigation. And as for finding a bleeding body on my bed, why, the idea is curiously offensive, Mr. Southard! I'm surprised that a man of your breeding and intelligence could come here with such a cock-and-bull story!"

Southard looked at the speaker with incredulity. Was it possible, he asked himself, that the voice of truth carried so little

conviction?

"You are on holy ground here," he heard Bathurst say in a fine declamatory manner. "That bedroom has been occupied by many eminent men. Longfellow slept in that bed, and Thoreau, too. Emerson wrote an essay in the room we are now using; and you want me, for some cerebral freak of your tired brain, to credit you with these sanguinary visions and gory details! I prefer to think of you as offending unwittingly, and being sincere in your mistaken way, than to imagine you have done this to gratify some perverse and malicious motive."

Southard called upon his reserve stock of patience.

"My dear sir." he observed, "I wish I could understand what obscure causes are acting to produce this singular effect, which to me is almost indistinguishable from obstinacy at its apotheosis. You are a man of the world. I am no visionary boy, to glory in the paltry notoriety that this affair may bring you and me. Let us talk it over without heat."

Mr. Bathurst pressed a button, which

brought a butler to his aid.

"It would be kinder," he said, "not to argue with you until you are better able to control your emotion. Good day, Mr. Southard!"

VII

SOUTHARD flung himself down in one of Rhona King's chairs, unable to conceal his chagrin.

"Well!" she said. "What luck?"

"None," he exclaimed. "I lack the power to convince any one of my guilt, or of my participation in the sins of others. I'm just back from seeing Curtis Bathurst, who is the most disagreeable and supercilious ass I ever met. He seems to think I am vindictively persisting in some obscure scheme of revenge, or else that the gods, about to destroy me, have removed my reason."

Southard smiled.

"Bathurst was rather fine in his way, I'll have to allow," he went on. "The home and its sanctity were uppermost in his mind. I shattered an ideal, or tried to, when I said I had seen a corpse in his own bedchamber, where it seems the great men of these parts were wont formerly to slum-When I insisted that Finneran had occupied a chair on which Emerson had put his feet during the course of writing an essay. I aroused the wildest passions of the Bathurst nature."

He recounted the entire interview with impartial and good-humored comment. In Rhona's presence he had lost the sting of

" Have you any theories about the mys-

tery?" she asked presently.

"None that will bear inspection. From your description of the woman, her distress was real. If she had been the criminal, she would not have asked you in as a convenient witness."

"It was not as a witness, but as a victim, that she needed me," Rhona asserted. "She brought me expecting that I should be found with the bag. I believe that she deliberately changed it, and that probably, but for the excitement that killed her, she would have appeared a witness against me." The girl shuddered. "I feel as if I had a very lucky escape. I wonder why she wanted to sacrifice a woman who had never done her any harm?"

"A woman will sacrifice any one, man or woman, to shield a person she loves, when she might make hardly a struggle for her own life. It's one of the confounding mys-

teries and glories of your sex."

"What must we do about it?" Rhona "We can't very well asked presently. leave things as they are, can we?"

"I wish I knew! We have done what was our obvious duty in reporting the matter, and the blame falls on Lawrence and Bathurst. I can't help being glad that I need not figure as poor Finneran's assailant; but I don't propose to let things drop, if you'll stand by me."

"You may be sure I will," she answered

readily.

"For some time I have been thinking of taking a trip to Egypt, and I shall start as soon as I can. Seriously, Miss King, men have been placed under observation for less reasons than I seem to have given. After I left Bathurst, I went back to my rooms and found that Dr. Graham Lawrence had called. He's the leading alienist in New England. He left his card, but another man who wore a long beard and suggested membership of the same profession did not. There were three telephone inquiries from people who wouldn't leave their names-alienists all, I believe; and when I crossed the yard, it was thronged with alienists, all shaking their heads at me. What has a retired student like me done to deserve all this?"

"When you stop to think of it," the girl answered a trifle shyly, "it was all

your own fault."

"Et tu, Brute!" he quoted reproachful-

" My fault, indeed?"

ly. "My fault, indeed?"
"It was," she insisted. "Your lecture is to blame. It made me think how little I knew of anything outside my own narrow life. I bought a new gown, a gorgeous hat, and a coiffure to match, and set out to meet the romance which you assured me I had passed, but which was there for all to

He looked at her eagerly. " And did you see it?"

"I found a nightmare," she replied more

gravely.

"Yes," he said, musing. "That's just what it was. When I was a small boy, and took overdoses of pie, nightmares had solutions; but this one hasn't, apparently."

"You want to solve it, don't you?" she

asked.

"I don't think the ancients longed more fervently to find the elixir of youth, or Fourier to solve his problems, than I do to prove to those obstinate men that I was right. I shall have plenty of leisure to plan my attack when I'm lounging in a dahabeah on the Nile. One might start immediately, I suppose, by writing eloquently to the press, or visiting all the public men in the community; but that might bring one to the observation wards of the Psychopathic Hospital, rather than to the success we desire."

"You may think me a coward," she said; "but the thought of unpleasant publicity makes me very nervous. I have no other means of making a living than teaching, and if I were asked to resign, as I might be, I shouldn't know what to do. afraid, in my heart, I still feel a little resentful against that poor woman you found

dead."

"I'll try and keep you out of it," Southard promised. "I don't think you need feel anxious at all. You'd probably be pictured in the heroic light, and have to spend several hours a day in declining offers of marriage. Anyhow, I'm not going yet, and we shall have plenty of opportunity to talk it over."

When Southard returned to his rooms, there was a man waiting for him-a fellow member of the faculty, one George Broadley, who occupied the chair of oceanography. Broadley was one of the socially dull men who astonish people by vast learning only when discussing their one subject. He admired the more versatile Southard, to whom he owed what social progress he had made since coming to Boston from the

He instantly launched into a panegyric of the Lawrence brothers, Graham and Stafford.

"They are both splendid fellows," Broadley declared; "men of the highest type in every sense of the word. I had the pleasure of meeting the doctor for the first time to-day." His voice assumed an air of some importance. "In fact, he called on me."

"Your fame must have reached him. Your name is becoming a household word, you know."

"I don't think it was that," the other replied with great seriousness. "I think he called because he happened to be passing, and may have remembered that I was a guest at one of your dinners when his brother was there."

"Still rather remote," Southard observed. "Fortunately one's social obligations don't ramify to that extent. What

had he to say?"

"We talked a lot about you," Broadley declared, on considering the matter. "He thinks very highly of you."

Southard smiled a trifle sourly.

"May one ask what form his interest

"Concern over your health. I agreed with him that you had too many interests and did too much work. I told him you had complained of what the quack advertisements term 'that tired feeling,' and suggested the very remedy he offered-more outdoor exercise, and earlier to bed."

"He is a most distinguished member of his profession," Southard agreed. "I suppose he inquired about my relatives in

Providence?"

Broadley nodded a ready acquiescence.

"How odd that you should guess! Yes, he said that while he knew you by sight and reputation, he had only heard that your father was a wealthy Rhode Island mill owner. He said his brother had never met any of your people, either."

Southard, with a petulant gesture, threw away the cigar he had half smoked.

"I consider his cross-examination a piece

of confounded impertinence!" "My dear friend!" Broadley cried. "What an idea! It struck me as a very

friendly and kindly act."

"It wasn't," Southard protested. "It was senile interference. I should like to strangle him with his own beard for his asinine behavior!"

Broadley's look of alarm restored Southard to a more equable frame of mind.

"George," he went on, "you may know all the witchways of the Gulf Stream, and the moods of the raging Pacific may be an open book to you, but you're a simple, guileless soul for all that. Don't you understand why the eminent Graham Law-

rence wasted half an hour of his highly paid time talking prettily to you?"

"What do you mean?" the oceanograph-

ist exclaimed.

"The brothers Lawrence, muddle-headed old philanthropists, imagine that my reason totters in the balance, and that expert guidance is needed. One of the most important things to ascertain is the family bill of health. We Southards are absurdly sane—so sane that if genius is a branch of the psychopathic tree, there will never be a genius among us. My father puts up a brand of golf that would shame you, and he could beat you at tennis, six games to love, whenever he wanted to. My mother is a great walker, and the rest of us eat and sleep as the just should. My grandfather is living, and only ninety-two. His wife would be living yet, but for the Ashtabula disaster. We have no hereditary ailments, and we shake off worries as Micawber shook off his debts."

For all his mild appearance, Broadley

had a degree of stubbornness.

"That may be," he said. "I've no doubt it is so; but there may just as easily be a danger of overstraining your mind which has nothing to do with your immediate family. You are overstraining your mind, Southard, and I've seen unmistakable evidence of it."

"'Is Saul also among the prophets?""

Southard mocked good-naturedly.

"I'm serious," Broadley declared. "A month ago you would never have so far forgotten yourself as to jest at murder."

Southard looked at him, startled. "What in the name of all that's unholy do you know about murders, may I ask?" he demanded.

Broadley's answer disarmed him of his momentary fear.

"You said you'd like to strangle Dr. Lawrence with his own beard!"

"I was annoyed," his friend responded. "I didn't relish his tactics, that's all."

"That's not all," Broadley said, with reproof in his voice, like one to whom duty sets stern tasks. "He hasn't a beard. He wears only a close-cropped mustache.

"So he does," Southard agreed. "It was the other fellow that had the beard."

"What other fellow?" Broadley asked, still unmollified.

"The other alienist who called on me. George, my rooms have been overflowing with alienists. All of them were interested

in overwork and ancestors, and most of them wore beards." He paused a moment. "You'd look well in a beard, George. You could wrap it around that sensitive throat of yours when our famous east wind is singing."

"We won't talk about beards," Broadley returned primly. "They seem to excite you. Now my suggestion is that you take a long walk every evening after dinner, and then you'll sleep better. I fully believe that your late hours have brought

you to this.

"To what?" Southard rather enjoyed Broadley's concern. "My dear man, I never was fitter mentally and physically. I'll admit I have worked hard, but I'm going to take a long rest; so why worry any

Broadley shook his head.

"No doubt you're fully convinced of what you say, but when I was out West we had a man—I think he was a literature professor, too-who seemed all right, but he signed his students' reports 'Napoleon.' I attribute it to hard work." Broadley stopped, a little confused. "I don't think you're Napoleon, but I think you need rest, and so does Lawrence."

Southard picked up his hat.

"I shall get him to tell me so to my face," he declared firmly.

"Don't - don't be violent!" Broadley pleaded, and laid a restraining hand on his friend's shoulder.

"What a fortunate thing that you haven't got a beard, after all," said Southard, laughing, "or we might need a new oceanographer!"

VIII

LEAVING the distressed scientist. Southard betook himself to the old red brick house on Beacon Hill where Graham Lawrence spent his few hours of leisure. The physician was many years his brother's senior, with a wise face full of humor, and a smile that disarmed an opponent.

"I've come," Southard said, "to thank you for your interest in my family tree."

"Or to rebuke an impertinent old man -which?"

Southard's expression lost some of its

acerbity.

"Well," he admitted, "I could hardly say that of you, doctor; but I do feel that your efforts, however well meant, are wasted on me."

"Blame Stafford for it," the elder brother replied. "It seems he has conceived the notion that you are so much the victim of overwork as to need me. I protested that it was not exactly what I cared to do, but he insisted so eloquently, and made out such a strong case, that I could hardly refuse. Occasionally even a poor marksman may hit the bull's-eye."

"And what sort of a shot did your

brother make?" Southard asked.

The alienist smiled.

"So far as one may judge, a poor shot," he answered. "I called in to see you, and I found a rather nervous, excitable gentleman who seems to be more in need of a rest than you."

"That's Broadley," the doctor was told;
"an immensely clever fellow who has
worked from infancy at top pressure. Like
your brother, he imagines me to be going to

pieces mentally."

There was still a touch of irritation in the younger man's face. Dr. Lawrence could see that any suspicion of his mental balance was distasteful. He had found

other men equally irascible.

"You probably think," he said, "in common with the laity at large, that physicians of my kind scan each man's face, eagerly looking for victims. That's a disastrous error. For my own part, I spend my time in trying to keep men and women out of the madhouse." He might equally well have stated that he spent his money, as well as his time, but he was not of those who boast. "In time I hope there will be fewer madhouses, and more psychopathic institutions." His eve lit up with his enthusiasm. "I see coming a time when we shall have advanced sufficiently in preventive science to ward off insanity and save reason as easily as we now prevent many lesser ills."

Southard listened with the attention to which a man of Lawrence's reputation was entitled. This old doctor, he reflected, honored by learned societies of America and Europe, devoted all his working hours and his fortune to arduous labors. Obviously he was a man in whom to trust.

"I'm afraid," said Southard, hesitating a little, "that the conflicting testimony of highly paid alienists at recent criminal trials has made me a trifle chary of accepting them very seriously. I've been prejudiced against you. I've looked upon you as eager collectors, seeking us poor laymen

to put in glass bottles and label with a polysyllabic term representing some newly discovered variety of disease."

Dr. Lawrence laughed good-humoredly. "And I might as well have accepted the comic paper idea of you professors, and thought of you all as bespectacled and absent-minded dryasdusts. I know, instead, that the modern professor is an up-to-date man—like you, for instance—an athlete, and no longer the visionary. There are few exercises so beneficial as the divest-

ment of one's prejudices."

"It's beyond the strength of some," Southard answered. "You must know that every layman becomes nervous when his mental health is called into question, and I'm no exception. It's a fear that is as old as man himself. Broadley, knowing nothing of my people, may have given you wholly wrong impressions. I'd like to tell you that we are abnormally healthy, and my ancestors had no history of hereditary disease. Any idea of labeling their pet idiosyncrasies, or mine, as forms of insanity is damnably uncomfortable, doctor!"

"I'm not accusing you or them of that," the elder man returned. "Dismiss that entirely. I learned enough from your impulsive friend Broadley to be sure that you don't suffer from impairment or perversion of any of the physical functions of the brain; but I should like to remark, as a friend, and without any trace of a professional manner, that you appear to me to be worried and in need of a rest. I'm glad to think that Commencement isn't very far

distant."

Dr. Lawrence looked at the younger man

in very kindly fashion.

"If you have anything that worries you," he went on, "and if I could give you just the friendly advice of an old man who has seen too much and heard too much to dare disbelieve, make what use of me

vou like."

"That's mighty good of you!" Southard said warmly. "I have some worries, and I have been overworked. For the latter, I'm going to go up the Nile or to motor through Europe—I've not decided which. For the former, I don't know what to do." He smiled. "Whenever I do unload myself of this particular thing that worries me, they say I'm in need of your, professional assistance. I'm getting afraid to try it on any one else till I've secured some evidence."

"How will you get this evidence?" he was asked.

"I hardly know myself yet," Southard replied, and then hesitated for a few seconds. "I think I'd feel better if I did tell you. It's a matter that must be kept quiet for a time, as you'll see. Briefly, I came upon a murdered man in one of the great mansions on Beacon Street. Next morning, when your brother's men searched, all traces had been removed."

"That's not unbelievable," the physi-

cian commented.

"But the other facts are," Southard told him, and related what had happened.

"It seems a very remarkable story," the

elder man admitted.

"It's more," Southard cried. "It's fantastically improbable. It is complicated by the fact that in my junior year I wrote fiction, and that more lately I have written on criminal psychology. Men like your brother, or Broadley-who deals in oceans and remains provincial-will start by the assumption that I am playing practical jokes and end by asking your aid. Bathurst seemed to see Providence, jealous of Boston, introducing all the elements of the rankest melodrama in her sacred Beacon Street. Personally I detest melodrama and prefer Maeterlinck, and yet I have introduced all the accessories—the mysterious woman who died just as she might have been going to disclose everything on the telephone; the imprisoned policeman and those mysterious beings whom he claims to have seen in the great empty house; his cruise down the Charles, and his last journey over the Styx. What is one to make of it?"

Dr. Lawrence, although he had listened as a friend, could not shake off the lifetime habits of the alienist. He observed the talker's changing expression, his choice of words, and those slight physical signs which betray so much to the trained observer. He admitted that in no way did Southard confirm his brother's suspicions. There was a certain easily understood excitement, but it was wholly under control, and he was glad to see that in parts the episode was provocative of humorous comments.

" If only I were younger," the physician said, "I should like to find out. If you are bent on trying, you won't have an easy course. My brother Stafford is one of those immovable men whose range of vision is not a wide one. Bathurst, too, evidently considers you a crank of a peculiarly annoying type. You have at the start a very big handicap in their opposition. Bathurst is an extremely wealthy man, and will probably try to block your way. What

have you done so far?"

"Very little," Southard rejoined. "I'm too busy now to give the thing the time it demands. I've a man-a regular detective -working for me, but he doesn't know anything about the real story. He is visiting undertakers, morgues, hospitals, and the like, to find out if the dead people I saw were discovered on that night, or subsequently. There have to be certificates filed with every death, and it's a long business, in a big city, to verify these, or to trace accidents to their source."

"Naturally, if these bodies are discovered, you'll be relieved of a great deal of

trouble."

Southard shook his head.

"I have felt all along that no ordinary end is possible. There may come a time when I have all the pieces of the puzzle fitted neatly together, but it will be difficult. It's hard enough when every opportunity is offered, but doubly so when one is not allowed in the house to interrogate servants, or to convince the owner that one is in earnest. Poor Bathurst is mortally offended."

He looked around the big room in which he sat. Dr. Lawrence's residence had been designed by Bulfinch, and was one of the

glories of Beacon Hill.

"You'd be indignant at the thought that this house was reputed to be a gambling hell or a white slaver's resort," Southard went on. "Bathurst is angry because I find corpses in his bedroom and label his commodious mansion a temporary resort for criminals. The Bathurst type is an admirable one, in a way, but not hard to classify."

" Are you sure you understand his character thoroughly," the physician demand-

ed, smiling.

"Absolutely," Southard returned. "He is meticulous to a degree, credulous of only what he thinks fit, hidebound by a pride in ancestry and family tradition which has some excuse, perhaps, but which he carries to a ridiculous excess. His daily exercise consists in walking to the Dorset Club for bridge."

"There is the South Carolina Bathurst to consider," Lawrence reminded him.

"Down there he even plays polo. You may know only a part of him. A few degrees of latitude may make a larger difference than you would suppose."

Southard was not convinced. He had met Bathurst at many houses, and had invariably observed the same supercilious

manner and intellectual conceit.

j

"I think I know Bathurst fairly well," he told the other. "In this particular case I don't need to search for motives for him. As a starter, I shall want to find out all I can about his servants, and the habits of the people who live in the houses adjacent to his."

"And you're not going to investigate Leonie, or Mrs. Bathurst, or Larry?"

There was a twinkle in the physician's eye as he asked this. Southard laughed.

"I want to keep an open mind," he replied; "but to accuse his family would be absurd, and to imagine Bathurst guilty of anything more serious than the loss of his temper merely a waste of time."

"As you will," Dr. Lawrence said; "but remember that he is an ill man to cross."

He shook hands cordially with the younger as Southard rose to go.

"I'm glad you've forgiven me. Show it's real by coming and seeing me sometimes. The next time I see you at the Dorset, I shall claim you as a partner for auction. Good luck to you!"

When his visitor was gone, he reached for a telephone, and speedily heard his

brother's voice answering him.

"I've just had a visit from John Southard," he said. "He told me about the Bathurst affair, and I don't think I am violating a confidence when I speak about it to you."

"Well, what did he say?" Stafford

snapped back.

It was plain to the elder brother that the younger was talking on a subject that irritated.

"He told me enough to make it evident that you and Curtis are behaving rather

queerly."

"My dear Graham," the voice came back, "his story is probably not quite the same version as mine would be. I made an investigation, and found nothing to back up his statements in any degree. Curtis was very much irritated by what he termed his dictatorial manner. According to him, Southard went in airily, flung gore all over Bathurst's most sainted possessions, and

demanded peremptorily that he should receive all aid in running the mystery—his mystery, remember, and Finneran's, not mine—to earth. Curtis is the last man in the world to take dictation from any one of Southard's age, and he had him shown to the door. It's regrettable. I like Southard, but Curtis is the older friend, and I'm bound to say I was a bit huffed over the way Southard wanted to make use of the department."

"What is Curtis going to do about it?" Graham Lawrence asked. "He can't very well pretend to think that John Southard is likely to trump up such a thing."

"We've talked it over," Stafford replied.

"He is going to employ detectives. If my help is needed, he will ask me. He didn't give Southard the satisfaction of learning that, and doesn't want him to know, either."

"That's not very friendly of him," the

elder man declared.

"Curtis takes likes and dislikes," Stafford answered. "For some reason or other, he seems to think Southard wants to hold him up to ridicule, and that's the one thing he desires to avoid. If he finds out that this fool story is true, Southard will be informed, I suppose, and his help will be accepted. Until then Curtis wants to run things to suit himself. Good-by!"

IX

His interview with the alienist had a comforting effect on Southard. He was glad to meet at least one man who did not cast immediate derision on his tale. His need of a change was unquestioned. He had lost weight lately, and suffered constantly from headaches—the result, probably, of eyestrain.

As he walked down Mount Vernon Street, his mind constantly reverted to his determination to solve what he called "the

Bathurst mystery."

The sight of a familiar house in Brimmer Street determined him to make one small and seemingly unimportant move in the game. It was a house in which a former school and college mate lived—one Amory Putnam, now attached to the staff of the near-by Church of the Advent. They had been warm friends from the day when they had met at Groton, though seeing little of each other in recent years. Southard knew Amory Putnam to be perfectly sincere and a faithful servant of his church, and re-

spected him for that mysterious attribute

which people call "character."

"Don't look bellicose," he said to the clergyman. "I haven't come to fling higher criticism at your head. I come in peace, Amory, to inquire about a member of your flock. I want to know about a Mrs. Hannah Alison. She's a former servant of Curtis Bathurst. She is now a caretaker when the family is away, and a sort of charwoman when it's in residence."

"I can tell you very little, except what I have observed as a priest," Father Putnam said slowly; "and that will hardly interest a modernist like you, Jack. If I tell you, for example, that under a series of heavy losses and disappointments she has maintained a spiritual serenity that puts me to shame, you will loftly infer that she has no intellect to analyze the relativity of herself to her universe. You will probably conclude that, like many women who have known sorrows, she sees the divine hand in the ordinary laws of cause and effect."

"The worst of men like you," said Southard amiably, "is that they never suppose that another man may take the opposite side merely as an intellectual exercise. It so happens that I'm interested in Mrs. Alison, and want to see her."

"That presents little difficulty, as far as I can see," the clergyman told him. "Call

upon her."

"I'm going to, when you've given me her address; but first I want to be assured that her word may be accepted in a matter that is of great importance."

"Personally," Father Putnam answered decidedly, "I should have no doubt of her." He looked at his friend, puzzled. "It

sounds rather mysterious.'

"It is," Southard responded. "I wish I could tell you what's on my mind, but I'm afraid your rampant sense of duty would bid you proclaim from the house-tops something I have learned."

"Do you think so poorly of me?" his

friend demanded.

"Or so ill of my present situation? Amory, I'm in a curious position. In the nicest sense, I'm a sort of concealer of crime."

"I would be willing to swear that you're not to blame. I've known you too long and too intimately to credit that."

"That's kind of you, Amory," Southard returned. "The theory's a pretty one; but

when you stand up for another man's possible actions, you forget that we are all of us unexplored worlds."

"You don't often depress me," his friend said, "but your manner does to-day. I think I'd prefer the higher criticism. You

need a change, Jack!"

"I'm going to take one. I wish you would tell me a little more about this Mrs. Alison. You spoke of misfortunes. Of

what nature-ill health?"

"Not that alone," replied Father Putnam. "Her daughter died last year from what was no more in its beginning than a bad cold; but I doubt if any one thing has troubled her so much as her son. It's common property that he is an associate of

criminals, if not one himself."

Southard listened eagerly. Here, for the first time since he started his investigations, was something that might prove of importance. The housekeeper's son as an associate of criminals might know more of the mansion for which his mother was supposed to care than Amory Putnam could suspect. The good mothers of bad sons, as he knew, too often hid the traces of their sins. Here might be such a case.

"Have you met him?" he asked with

assumed carelessness.

"Often," the clergyman answered. "He is a big, strong fellow, a compositor by trade, well able to work and make good money, but he prefers to follow the races and pool rooms. He was here a week or so ago, and, much against my inclination, I lent him ten dollars. He wanted, he said, to go to New York and make a fresh start. I had made such loans for similar causes before. To my surprise, he returned the ten dollars only a few days ago, with a reminder that he had not forgotten what else he owed me, and that he intended to pay me in full. It was mystifying to learn that he had at last fallen in with men who were good friends. I can make nothing of it, but naturally I am glad."

"Do you suppose he could be with a band of crooks who are successful?" asked

Southard.

"I don't care to think that," the other said. "I would rather think that he has begun an honest life."

But Southard gleaned from his friend's air of sadness that this hope was not very strong. It confirmed him in the belief that here was a clew of importance. He rose as soon as he could, feeling that nothing

was more necessary than an immediate interview with Hannah Alison.

As he was leaving the cheerful room, he caught sight of the plaster cast of a dog over which, years before, he had shot. It was an English setter belonging to Amory Putnam—a dog which had taken prizes, and which had in its blood, its owner averred, some trace of the Laverack strain.

"That's Ranger!" Southard exclaimed.

"It's splendid. Who did it?"

"It was a present from Mr. Curtis Bath-

urst," the clergyman answered.

"But who did it?" Southard persisted.

"He did," Father Putnam answered.

"Surely you know that he does very good sculpture? He is amazingly versatile. I'm very proud of that, Jack!"

"I'd never have suspected it," mused Southard, thinking of Curtis Bathurst.

"The more one knows of him, the more one becomes astonished at the things he does more than commonly well," the clergyman continued. "Personally, I'm not much drawn to him; but Mrs. Bathurst is a kinswoman of mine, and one of those strong, serene natures that always rouse my admiration. She has had a difficult family to manage."

"How so?" Southard questioned.

"Headstrong and independent, all of them," Father Putnam replied. "They could hardly fail to be so, when one considers their parents. I am not sure that hers has always been an enviable lot." The clergyman smiled. "I'm afraid you will accuse me of becoming garrulous in my old age."

"I'm a great believer in garrulity," Southard said. "It prevents brain stagnation. At what number does Hannah Alison

live, and on what street?"

"Quite near here," he was told; "No.

58A Myrtle."

Southard found that the house was a large brick residence, formerly the abode of well-to-do citizens, but now sunk to an abode for "roomers." The landlady frowned when she saw him. His prosperous appearance precluded the likelihood of finding in him an applicant for lodging, and raised the fear that he might be another of those engaging salesmen who wasted her time and their own.

She replied gruffly that she knew Mrs. Alison, and was sorry to lose her.

"Isn't she here?" Southard demanded, taken aback.

"She left the house yesterday," he was

"Do you know where she went?" he in-

quired eagerly.

By this time the woman had decided that he was not one of those who seek to sell unneeded goods to the impecunious, and allowed herself to become voluble.

"She was that close-mouthed I couldn't drag nothing out of her," she returned, with the rising inflection that the memory of her wasted endeavor brought. "Whether, after being with them Bathursts for twenty years, they threw her out, or whether that son of hers is in trouble again, I can't make out; but it's one of them two things, you can tell the world!"

"Her employers would never do that, surely," Southard commented, hoping to

learn more.

"It's the housekeeper they've got," she returned. "I never did think much of that Miss Gammons. She's always had her knife into Hannah Alison. And what do they want a housekeeper for?" she cried angrily. "Is Mrs. Bathurst too good to look after her own house, with all the help she's got? They say she ain't well, but that don't go with me. I've had rheumatism for ten years, but I have to do all my own work."

Southard interrupted her harangue.

"Then you think the housekeeper dismissed Mrs. Alison?"

"I know she's always hated Hannah and tried to get her out. She told the boss that there ought to be a man caretaker in the house, and not a feeble old woman, when the family was down South. Why, there's more silver in that house than you could shake a stick at—solid silver, too, every bit of it!"

She rambled on, but Southard heard little of her chatter. It seemed that he was stumbling upon clews where he had not expected any. Why had Gammons, the housekeeper, made a set at an inoffensive old woman? Might it not reasonably be because she desired to place a friend or confederate in the position? And if so, for what purpose? He felt that he was plunging into a task that might lead him far beyond the bounds of Beacon Street and Boston.

"Perhaps she left to go to her son," he suggested. "He might be in need of her."

"I guess he is," the landlady said; "or in need of the bit of money she's put by in the savings bank. I've got Will Alison's number!"

"You've no idea of her address, then?"

he asked again.

"She said she'd write," the landlady replied; "but I guess she's not going to have much time, if she's got to look after him."

"He may have got a good position," Southard hinted. "I'm told he gets good

money when he works."

"I'm not so sure about his getting a steady job," the woman asserted; "but I guess he must have got a bit of money, now I come to think of it. Hannah give me the sticks of furniture in her room. There was a bed, and three chairs, and a rug, and a pretty fair table. Well, if Will's got money, it wasn't earned honest, take it from me!"

On leaving her, Southard walked across to the drug store and called up Amory Putnam by telephone. The clergyman expressed astonishment at finding that Mrs. Alison had left, and gave his friend the address from which her son had written. He made a memorandum of it—120 West Fourteenth Street, New York.

From the same booth Southard telephoned to Rhona King, asking if he might come in that evening and see her.

"I've had a strenuous day, trying to un-

tangle our affairs," he explained.

It had grown to be an increasing pleasure to call on this tall, pretty girl who could, after all, unbend and prove rarely entertaining. That evening he felt that he had really come nearer to making a fair beginning than at any time previously. Her interest in his doings was gratifying.

"Now," he said, when he had reported the day's happenings, "we have some new phases to think about—first, the caretaker's sudden disappearance, and the reckless giving away of her lares and penates. Then comes the wicked son motif, and finally the episode of the crabbed housekeeper. It is possible that all these things may be explained away with perfect ease, but I like to feel that they are all mysteriously intertwined, and that they have a bearing on the murder. To-morrow, if you can make time, I want you to take a hand."

"I'd love to," the girl exclaimed; "but I doubt my ability. I'm one of the few women you have met who did not think she would be a great success on the stage!"

"All the more likely to make a hit," he said. "It's the Gammons woman I want

you to interview. Ask her where Hannah Alison is, and why she left. Encourage her to gossip. I can't go, because the servants there would recognize me."

"How can I go there and ask such questions outright?" Rhona exclaimed.

"She wouldn't tell me."

"We must use guile," he explained cheerfully. "I recently heard a bright young canvasser selling a course of correspondence school lessons on domestic economy, and I borrowed all her voluminous literature from the victim. You must tell this Miss Gammons that in a few years' time no one will be employed in any domestic service without one of your diplomas. It's all in the circular that I have with me. She won't want to buy the course, and will be relieved if you start to talk on something else. The psychology of that is certain. Then comes your chance to talk about Hannah, of whom you knew. Tell her, if your conscience permits, that Hannah took a gold medal in the course on 'How to Be a Charwoman.' We want to find out if there is bad blood between the women, why the landlady dislikes the housekeeper, and her opinion of Will."

"Suppose I bungle the whole thing?" Rhona asked. "Won't that make you

furious?"

"You won't bungle it," he said with conviction. "Do you suppose I think that of you?"

"There's another horrid thought," she laughed. "Suppose Miss Gammons becomes enthusiastic, and wants to take her degree?"

"Sell her the course and get a commission," he said; "but don't take any payment, or you might get into trouble."

"I'm not as ready as you think," she

said doubtfully.

"I've seen you sorely tried," he assured her, "and not found wanting. If you can let me know in time for me to take the five o'clock train for New York, I shall be glad. I'm after Will Alison," he explained, "and I want to be thoroughly posted. When can you go?"

"At three," she told him.

"Then, if you arrange to meet me at the English Tea Shop at four, we can talk it over, and I shall have plenty of time to get to the station."

"You seem to have mapped your plan out rather thoroughly. What happens when you get back from New York?" "The house next door to Bathurst," he told her. "So far as I can find out, Lawrence's men did not look on the roof for signs of a forced entrance. It might be that there is some tiny shred of evidence that may help. I know the people who live there—at least, one of them—and I shall make a call to which I was invited. The old lady I know, Miss Georgina Lownam, says that on the night of the tragedy she thought she heard a noise on the roof. Perhaps she did, although it seems she habitually hears noises that others don't."

"They won't receive you on the roof,"

Rhona objected.

"I know," he said. "That's the awkward part of it. I must get there, though, if human ingenuity can manage it without offending too flagrantly against the amenities. From their roof it is a drop of only a few feet to Bathurst's leads, and there's a big, inviting skylight."

It might be the work of Will Alison's

gang," she commented.

"The mother would let him in by a window." Southard frowned. "Unfortunately, Amory gave her too good a character to let that theory hold water. The worst of the whole business is that one can find an answer to every objection. I shall work on the theory that while pursuing all the false clews, we shall chance upon the right one."

"That won't simplify matters," she re-

minded him.

"It will keep one in deadly earnest all the while. I am persuaded that you will gain the most valuable information from the housekeeper, and that I shall find Will

Alison rolling in ill-gotten gains."

"But nothing was stolen," she objected.
"There you go!" he cried in despair.
"Nothing fits in." He brightened. "But perhaps the man they murdered had money. Anyhow, Alison has so much money that he pays a debt which he could very well let slide, and his aged mother flings furniture about with a splendid carelessness."

"What news have you had from the man who has been interviewing undertakers and

visiting hospitals?"

"Nothing as yet," Southard responded.
"Two bodies were picked up with knife wounds, but they were stabbed to death. One was a Swede with a yellow beard, and the other an old man." He sighed. "Let's leave all that till to-morrow and talk about something cheering. Do you know, for in-

stance, that I find it very charming here, Miss King? Why on earth did I never meet you anywhere before? Were you always a recluse?"

"You have met me before," she returned demurely. "I have been at two separate functions where you were."

"Think of it!" he exclaimed. "I suppose some ancient fossil was buttonholing me and keeping me away from all that was pleasant."

"On both occasions," she said quietly, you were being buttonholed by Mrs. Brabyn, and you seemed to enjoy it."

Southard turned on her quickly, wondering what Rhona knew of the famous Ellen Brabyn, and of his mild flirtation with her.

Mrs. Brabyn was a clever woman, and a rich one. Providence had removed an elderly and jealous spouse, leaving her a beautiful home in Commonwealth Avenue and a country house on the North Shore. She was widely known for her weekly dinner parties. To have been to Ellen Brabyn's dinners need not prove many generations of Boston blue blood, but it was a warranty that the guest was well bred and entertaining. She did not allow those related to her by ties of consanguinity to obtrude, unless they filled the necessary conditions.

Southard was a frequent guest, because he was of the clever type she liked. At thirty-three he was more than usually good-looking, and one of the best known professors at his famous university, besides being a member of a wealthy and distinguished Providence family. There are families in Rhode Island's capital who bow their head to no New England stock. He was an acceptable visitor at her North Shore home; for when he was entertained, he felt it his duty to be entertaining.

Mrs. Brabyn had never been able to determine just how well she liked him. There were half a dozen men who wanted to marry her, and who felt that she had given them some sort of encouragement; but John Southard had never been enrolled in their company. She was piqued that he held back, and perhaps she gave him looks of a more tender nature than she vouch-safed to the faithful six who had offered their all. For the rest, she was a pretty woman of a clean-cut, imperious style, not uncommon in type, but possessed of more charm than most.

It was not likely, Southard admitted, as he thought of what Rhona said, that he would have paid much attention to another when Ellen Brabyn was claiming him. She had the knack of demanding and receiving a man's entire attention. Nevertheless, looking at Rhona King, he realized that she was a better-looking woman. It seemed inconceivable that a certain arrangement of hair, and a studied attention to dress, could make so vast a transformation as he now beheld.

"Mrs. Brabyn is a delightful woman," he said presently, "and a very clever one, too. She has always been friendly with Curtis Bathurst. I wonder what she would

say to our discovery!"

Rhona listened a trifle impatiently. She had seen the celebrated Mrs. Brabyn at the house of her wealthy friend, and had found in her only a rich woman who had spent many hours in studying the details of hairdressing, millinery, and costumes—which men affect to scorn, and yet whose cumulative effect brings them to their knees. To Rhona's way of thinking, Ellen Brabyn was essentially a rich, idle woman who understood men and used her knowledge well.

"She's a Back Bayite herself," Rhona reminded him; "so she would be equally

horrified."

"I'm not so sure," he returned. "She has the saving grace of humor — unlike Bathurst. I think you'd like her if you

really knew her well."

This was the only silly thing, Rhona reflected, that she had ever heard John Southard permit himself to utter. She had thought of Ellen Brabyn more than he suspected, and had long ago decided that she detested that type of woman.

She found herself prevaricating with ap-

palling fluency.

"Perhaps I should," she commented. She saw the man who was so much in her

thoughts turning over in his mind how best to bring such an introduction about.

х

At three o'clock the next afternoon Rhona walked up the steps of the Bathurst mansion with an outward semblance of calm and poise. She was doubtful as to the success of her mission. After a life where each action was the logical effect of what had been planned, she had now plunged into something wholly different,

where she must draw upon an adaptability never yet tested. No longer in the dignified position of an associate professor of a renowned institution of higher learning, she was masquerading as the agent of a course of lectures which her critical judgment had pronounced worthless.

She succeeded, without giving a name, in being shown directly into the housekeeper's room. Before she could start her canvass, Miss Gammons, a matronly woman of forty

with a pleasant face, exclaimed:

"Why, surely it's Miss Rhona King!" Since no sign of recognition lighted up the girl's face, she added: "You've forgotten me, I see."

"I'm afraid I have," Rhona confessed

awkwardly.

"Don't you remember Kate Gammons, who lived in Wareham? My father was bookkeeper in the nail works at Parker Mills. We lived on Sandusky Road—Easy Street, they call it—and you used to drive by with your father."

"Of course I remember you now," Rhona said. "You offered to give me a St. Bernard puppy, and my father wouldn't

let us keep it!"

"Afraid it would eat too much," Miss Gammons reminded her. "Said there were

mouths enough to fill as it was."

Rhona remembered the pretty little green house whose garden ran down to the big mill pond behind, and the two Gammons girls, who had always looked so happy as she drove by with her father and his dejected wife. It was at once pleasant and awkward to meet one of the sisters again. The whole art of housekeeping in twelve correspondence school lectures would have to be forgotten now.

Miss Gammons was evidently proud of her visitor. News of Rhona's success had leaked through to her native town, and there had been a paragraph in a local newspaper, with a picture of her. The local library, even, had purchased a copy of her book of essays. But there must be some reason not yet expressed which had brought her to make this call. Miss Gammons

looked at her inquiringly.

At that moment there came to Rhona

her needed inspiration.

"A friend of mine is interested in a woman who used to work here," she said. "Her name is Hannah Alison. On calling at her room in Myrtle Street, the landlady said that she had gone away, and could give me no address. We thought you

would know."

"I wish I did," Miss Gammons returned.

"She went off in such a hurry that she didn't even take the bit of money that was coming to her."

"I understood from the landlady in Myrtle Street that you'd dismissed her."

"Oh, no!" the housekeeper said decidedly. "I should never have got rid of Hannah. She was a good worker, and I'm sorry she's gone."

"Why did she leave, then?" Rhona

questioned.

"I don't know," Miss Gammons answered. "It was Mr. Bathurst who dismissed her, and no one ever asks him why he does things."

"But I understood that you yourself recommended Mrs. Alison's dismissal and the engagement of a man caretaker in her

place?"

"Why, that's true, in a way," Kate Gammons replied. "You see, I'm housekeeper, and if anything goes wrong I'm blamed for it. There are so many valuable things here—rugs and bronzes and pictures that the family won't send into storage—that I felt we ought to have an able-bodied man, or at any rate a younger woman. Poor Hannah is so deaf that you could move the furniture away and she wouldn't know. She wouldn't have been out of pocket. I could always have used her at Aiken; but she preferred to stay North to be near that precious son."

"What sort of a man is he?" Rhona

queried.

"No good," the other asserted. "I used to be afraid that he might get in here and go through the place with some gang

of crooks like himself."

Rhona felt that she was acquiring information which Southard would consider of real value. It was surely important to find that the aged caretaker was so deaf as not to hear noises, except at close range. To such as knew her infirmity it would be easy enough to take advantage of it. In her excited imagination the girl could see the great house peopled with criminals, who could remove its valuable contents in safety so long as one stood distantly guarding the old woman.

Miss Gammons, assuming that Rhona's interested friend required more information as to Hannah's character, hastened to give it.

"The Sisters of St. Margaret, in Louisburg Square, know all about her. They will speak for her if your friend needs any other recommendation."

Rhona thanked her, and tried to lead her to talk about her employers. Miss Gammons declined to be enthusiastic.

"They pay good money," she said, "and they're fairly considerate, but it's a difficult house to live in. Mr. Bathurst wants everything done his way, and the madam's the same. Then Miss Leonie and her brother, they upset things so that I have trouble to keep the help."

"Mr. Bathurst seems a masterful sort

of man," Rhona commented.

"He soon gets over his tantrums," the housekeeper told her. "He sent Hannah away in a fit of anger for something she did when she was dusting his studio. He thinks he'll never see her again, but she'll turn up—you mark my words—and I'll take her back. He'll be pleased to see her, too, whether it's here, or in Aiken, or London, or Italy."

"I didn't know he had so many places,"

Rhona said truthfully.

"The house in London belonged to her family. She was an Amory, you know. The villa in Italy they call the Honeymoon Palace, because it's always being lent to their friends or relations when they're newly married. Then he's got what they call a shooting box in Scotland, and a camp up at Kennebago, in Maine. There's nothing he wants that he don't get."

Rhona rose to her feet and held out her

hand

"I'm very much obliged for your help," she said.

She thought she had remembered every one of Southard's instructions. Suddenly she bethought her that she had not yet fathomed the reason of the landlady's dislike of the housekeeper. It seemed of small importance now, since the character of Kate Gammons was no longer wrapped in mystery, but there might be something in it worth knowing.

"Why," she asked, "did that landlady seem to bear you a grudge?"

Miss Gammons smiled.

"I called to see Hannah once, when she had a bad cold, and I told the woman that she kept her house in a filthy condition. I shouldn't wonder if that's the whole story. I'm very glad to have seen you, Miss King. Father 'll be glad to hear of you, and so

will my youngest sister, Maggie. She's living down there yet. When you see Hannah, you might tell her she can get her place back when she wants it."

XI

Southard left on the Merchants' Limited, well satisfied with Rhona's success. Despite some conflicting statements on other matters, all had agreed that Hannah Alison's son was a dangerous man, and a companion of criminals, if not an accomplice in their crimes. His sudden accession to money was the only explanation of his repaid loan to Father Putnam, the gift of the furniture to the landlady, and his mother's failure to collect the wages due her.

In the case of a woman of her saving nature, this last seemed a fact of no little importance. It was quite possible that she had not been dismissed by her employer, but had chosen to leave summarily, on hearing of her son's prosperity. She might even have gone to New York to try to lead him from the influence of men who were ruining him.

Of her probity Southard had little doubt. His friend Amory, despite his kindly nature, had been too long a priest to be easily deceived by any insincere affectation of

devoutness.

At the address given him, Southard paused almost in dismay. He had expected to find a tenement house, but was confronted, instead, with the castellated building which is the American headquarters of the Salvation Army. From what he had learned of Alison, it was quite likely that the young man had chosen to give such an address as an impudent piece of bravado. Southard could hardly think of him as one of those busy, cheerful, uniformed men who were passing in and out of the big building.

Presently one of them accosted the stranger courteously, and asked if he could aid him in any way. The name of Alison was unknown to him; but when he learned that he was a printer by trade, he sent Southard aloft in a small, slow elevator to the com-

posing rooms.

The foreman came over to the visitor

and listened to his question.

"I know him," he said. "He's been with us for about two weeks, and he's making good." He pointed to a man in a distant corner. "Will's there," he said, "working on the stone."

Southard threaded his way across the room. Alison was a tall, strong man, his hair beginning to turn gray. There was upon him the air of cheerfulness and content in work which seemed characteristic of those whom Southard had met in the building. He was making up a form, and did not see the stranger approaching until he heard a new voice addressing him.

"Yes," he said, "I'm Will Alison. What

can I do for you, sir?"

Southard looked at him closely, watching every fleeting change of expression in the man's face.

"I've just come over from Boston to gather information about a crime recently committed there."

There was no doubt that Alison breathed hard, and a look of alarm crept into his countenance.

"You don't look like a Central Office

man," he said.

"I have no connection with the police at all," Southard replied. "I am making an independent investigation, and I expect to find you able to be of assistance."

"God helping me," the man returned, not without a certain air of dignity, "I will answer any question you may put."

"When were you last in the house of Mr. Curtis Bathurst, in Beacon Street?"
"Never," Alison exclaimed promptly.
"I've never set foot in it. My mother thought that if a man with my reputation was seen going down to the help's entrance, it might put her in bad; so I kept away." He sighed. "I guess she was right in being ashamed of me, and of the fellows I traveled with; but I'm through with that gang now, and she'll be able to hold her head up again!"

Southard looked at the speaker curiously. He had studied William James's work on the varieties of religious experiences. Here was a man taken, as it were, from its pages, who seemed suddenly to have put off the old transgressor, and who was cheerfully working at his trade. There were still upon Alison's face those deep lines which evil passions and dissipation had graven, which even the happier expression could not yet wholly efface.

"Are you so sure of yourself?" Southard asked gently.

"No, sir," said the man; "not of myself, but of the One who saved me."

"I'm glad to have found you were not in that house," he said. "I'm glad for your mother's sake. Did she ever tell you of a visit the police made there?"

"She was all worked up over it," Alison said, smiling. "Poor mother, she can't bear mussy feet in the house, and her stair carpets were a sight, she told me." He looked at Southard with growing interest. "Was there anything in that?"

"It was more serious than your mother supposed," Southard said guardedly. "I should like to call on her, if I may. Will

you give me her address?"

"Surely, sir," said Alison, making a note

of it on a piece of paper.

On his way down to the main floor, a certain element of doubt crept into Southard's mind. Suppose Alison had chosen to spend a month here, working at his trade, until a possible search for him might be abandoned? Suppose this change of heart sprang from the desire to conceal his whereabouts, and not from any honest motive?

Recidivistic tendencies were common to criminals. Why should this man remain honest when he had tasted of the other and

easier way?

It was not a charitable thought, but Southard was not engaged in any ordinary undertaking. In such a quest as his, motives must be examined, not taken for

granted.

He found Mrs. Alison occupying two rooms in Ninth Avenue. They were small and dark, with a weary outlook on a court-yard, wherein the drying clothes of her neighbors flapped all day. They were fairly well furnished with new things, however, and the dull windows were redeemed by boxes, in which spring flowers had already begun to make a brave showing.

"I came to tell you," he said, "that Miss Gammons has money which she desires to send you, and also that you can have your position back if you wish."

"Thank her kindly, sir," Mrs. Alison returned; "but I'm through with housework. You see, I've got my son to look after now."

She was a small, thin old woman with gnarled hands, but she sat up in a prim, precise manner, the proud mother of her boy. Her face wore, at mention of him, a look of ineffable love which spoke of the triumph she felt after those prayerful, tearful years.

"I have just seen him," Southard told her. "He looked well and happy, I

thought."

"He is," she said gladly. "He'll leave drink alone, and by and by we'll move out to my old home in Jersey."

She sighed in perfect contentment at the thought of a country cottage where she could keep chickens and pass the rest of

her poor years in peace.

"Did you like Miss Gammons?" Southard asked.

"We all did," she answered. "She was a driver, but I was never one to be afraid of work, and we didn't have any cross

words."

"She doesn't understand why you left," he said artfully. "She said you went off suddenly, after what she supposed was a

row with Mr. Bathurst."

"You see," said the old woman, "he's so mighty particular. He likes to have people—help, I mean—who never make a noise or get in his way." She smiled without bitterness. "I'd have had the chance to be there now if he hadn't made me laugh with his play acting."

"Mr. Bathurst make you laugh with

play acting!" Southard gasped.

The idea seemed ludicrously improbable. "He did," she asserted. "It was up in the studio. I was down on my knees, washing some woodwork, and he didn't know I was there. I'd often heard him talking to himself when I was outside, but when I knocked he'd stop and glare at me as I came in. This last time he was talking like as three different people were there, and I couldn't help laughing."

"But could you hear?" he asked. "I thought you were hard of hearing. If you are not, I've been raising my voice un-

necessarily."

"I am a bit deaf," she admitted; "but it wasn't so much what I heard as what I saw. It was his face that made me laugh, sir, and I was so ashamed of myself afterward you couldn't imagine. He was mad through and through, and told me to get out of the house then and there. I told Mrs. Bathurst, when I went to say goodby, that her husband would make a fortune on the stage."

"And what did she say?" he asked.

Mrs. Alison assumed a look of distress. "She asked me not to mention it to anybody, as people wouldn't understand his ways." She looked at Southard with a faint air of hostility. "And I've been and told a stranger! I don't think I caught your name?"

"It's Southard," he told her. "I'm a friend of Father Putnam, of your former church in Boston. My main reason for coming, Mrs. Alison, was to ask you about a certain morning late in April, when you found the Bathurst house filled with policemen. Do you remember?"

"Indeed I do," she returned indignantly.

"There wasn't a closet or wardrobe or trunk in the whole house they didn't empty out and throw the stuff about on the floor! Talk about the trouble Miss Leonie had with the custom inspectors in New York! Why, they were angels compared with the policemen."

"What did they come for?" he asked.

"We none of us heard," she answered, referring to the servants; "but it leaked out that Miss Georgina Lownam, next door, heard sounds, and telephoned that there were burglars. She's that nervous, poor lady, that she's likely to do it any time. Anyhow, sir, I can say that, except for the muss the police made, there was nothing out of the way in the house. Mrs. Bathurst told Miss Gammons about it, but I was forbidden to talk; and as the other servants weren't back from Aiken, they didn't know."

Southard took his leave of the woman, no nearer a solution than when he left New England.

(To be continued in the July number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

THE POPPY OF OBLIVION

I HAD not thought I could forget so soon.
Why, 'tis but scarcely more than one brief moon
Since last we met,
Laughing to think we ever could forget;
And now your name is a dim thing
Fading with every hour,
Swift as a spectral flower
In early spring.

Three years were only you—
Your marble beauty and the woodland stream;
And now I ponder was it ever true?
Was it ever e'en a dream?
Alas, I am filled with utter shame for this—
I that have found another mouth to kiss,
Another face to worship—I that said
I could not live an hour without your face,
As lovely still as faces of the dead!
For this oblivion God give me grace!

Ah, that one dream should cast the other out, One love another slay,
Putting its pleading memories to rout!
And all because, one hapless summer day,
Anger burned red between us, and you went
Seeking forgetfulness, even as I have sought.
A thousand verses are the testament
Of the wild love that to your feet I brought;
And now each little tongue
Seems written in some idle antique tongue.

That you should me forget had not seemed strange; But that I, too,
Could with cuch swift erasure forget you!
Sad creatures all of us of chance and change.
Is nothing stable, then, all dreams and lies?
And yet I ask myself—do I forget
Your hair, your breast, your eyes?
Perhaps, though knowing not, I love you yet—
This my forgetfulness a fancy, too!
What if you love me still, and I love you?

White Crinolines

TWO GENTLE MAIDS OF LONG AGO MAKE OF THEIR HEARTS AN ALTAR PLACE OF MEMORY

By Conrad Aiken

THE life of the Holway sisters might have been said, at that season, to be idyllic. It was a garden life, and if it had an audible sound, the sound was a garden sound. It suggested the light swing and flash of leaves, the comfortable whir of small wings, the cool odor of grass still wet with dew.

When they appeared in public—that is, in the elm-shaded streets of Stoughton—they were always together. Their white gate would open, and Miranda would come out first, looking about her with grave youthful pleasure. Isabel would follow, being the younger, with the wicker shopping basket on her arm.

The gate clicked its small but necessary item in the ritual, and off they set—white crinolines absurdly swaying in unison, black slippers twinkling and disappearing in perfect step—for the tremendous journey, perhaps one-third of a mile, to the grocery shop.

Greetings, here and there, had to be said. Mr. Foster waved a clawlike hand to them from his garden, where he was engaged in some mysterious operation with his rain barrel.

"A lovely morning!" Miranda cried, with charming restraint.

"Isn't it heavenly?" Isabel more emphatically echoed, with a pleasing timidity, however, and a glance afterward, as if for approval, at her sister.

Next came Mrs. Hatfield.

"Isn't it warm to-day, Mrs. Hatfield?"
Miranda inquired with silvery simplicity.
"Yes, isn't it sultry?" trilled Isabel.

Then, smiling together, as over a universe thus between them intimately blessed, and not pausing for the reply—which was, to be sure, a mere form—they continued their journey.

Everything in the day had its proper moment, as every day had its particular ritual in the bright cycle of the week. On Monday two pairs of young arms could be seen, now and then, flashing in the morning sunlight, through the lilac hedge that surrounded the sahill back garden, as they pinned the washing to the clothesline. On Tuesday they sat at opposite ends of the old window seat overlooking the prim garden, took the small withered oranges that served as darning balls, and went through the stockings.

"I do wish those sparrows wouldn't be so noisy!" Miranda might remark—meaning, all the same, that it was pleasant to hear the cheerful birds, pleasant to look out over the neat lawn and see them hopping importantly in the sunlight.

"Aren't they dreadful little things?" was

the orthodox reply to this.

Then, perhaps, followed the perennial question of the relative merits of crocheted and embroidered antimacassars. For the thousandth time the dark eyes of Miranda, and the shy gray eyes of Isabel, gravely surveyed the sitting room.

"Do you think Henry would like the embroidered ones better?" Isabel put the

question shyly.

"What does Henry know about such things, Isabel? Very likely he never notices them at all!"

"Oh, I think Henry notices things; but of course you know better than I."

"There! That's done. I think the roses need cutting. Did you notice them this morning? How I wish mother could see them! Bring the scissors, Isabel—I'll take the basket."

The roses were cut and laid neatly in the basket. Here and there an interloping plantain was frowned upon and prodded out of the grass. Dandelions were sighed at, but amiably. The garden was the heart of the two women's existence. In the garden they ceased to be grave Miranda and shy Isabel; they were a subdued duet of tender excitement and delight.

"Oh, dear, here's that old mole again!

He's ruining the lawn!"

"Couldn't we put a sign up, asking him to be more careful?"

"But he can't see, Isabel!"

The garden was not wholly the heart of their existence. There was Henry, to whom Miranda had been betrothed for five years. Henry lived in the village of Hill Falls, six miles away. Every Tuesday he drove over to Stoughton, arrived punctually at five o'clock, took supper, and remained for the evening. Their life was divided equally between the garden and Henry.

II

ONE Tuesday in August a peculiar thing happened. As usual, Henry Faxon arrived punctually on the chattering stroke of five. Miranda, in white, stood at one side of the door to receive him; Isabel, in blue, stood at the other side. Suddenly producing from behind his back the inevitable bouquet of sweet peas—purple, white, and pink—Henry, after burying his nose in the fragrant blossoms, gave them, not to Miranda, but to Isabel.

"Put them quickly in water, Isabel! They're parched," he said.

Isabel flushed.

"Lovely!" she murmured, and danced at once into the kitchen with them.

The operation of pumping water for them seemed, to Miranda, to make the pump squeak with remarkable harshness.

Henry was graver than usual—although, to be sure, he was never talkative. He irritated Miranda by dwelling persistently on his farm affairs. Why should this irritate her? It was her duty to take an interest in them, and she frowned reprovingly at herself.

He looked very handsome. There was something about him to-day — something like a different light in his face—which made him very attractive. When he kissed her—he always kissed her once, as soon as Isabel had left them—she opened her eyes to wonder at this, and it seemed to disconcert him.

"Yes, this drought is bad-very bad. No second crops this year! I wish I'd put

down more corn, now. Bates did, and he's thanking his stars for it. Andrew says he'll be lucky if he gets enough winter fodder for his own cattle, let alone having any to market. Well, there are many worse off than I am—that's something to be thankful for!"

"Why, Henry, what a thing to say!"
"Can't I be thankful? Don't be silly!
I don't wish anybody any harm."

"It's just the way you said it."

"How did I say it? Hello, you've got the old clock going! Did Giles fix it? 'Patten, of London, 1756.' That's a fine clock. I used to tell your father—"

"Miranda!" Isabel called to her sister from the kitchen. "Is it time to put the

"Yes, dear!"

What was it Henry used to say to father? She looked at him, expecting him to go on with his sentence, but he seemed to be in a muse, as if Isabel's voice had interrupted his thought. He rose languidly from his chair.

"'Patten of London, 1756," he murmured. "Shall we help Isabel? Oughtn't

we to help her? It's very hot."

"Yes, we might."

"Now, Henry, pump the water — fifty strokes!" cried Isabel.

Henry laughed with a candor that seemed to Miranda somewhat abrupt; but why shouldn't he laugh? He was goodnatured. He was all kindness. She liked his strong hands, so firm in their grip of the pump handle, and the easy, broad stoop of his shoulders to the regular stroke.

That unbearable squeak! Suddenly, for some unknown reason, she felt a sharp desire to cry. A queer, brief, ecstatic sensation was in her eyes, her throat, her heart. She put her wrist against her lips.

"It's the heat," she said to herself.
"This drought is bad, as Henry says."

She felt like laughing hysterically at the oddity of that echo, but mastered the impulse, and lifted the glass salad bowl between her palms.

Ш

AFTER supper there came a game of cribbage with Isabel. Miranda sewed, lifting her dark eyes now and then to watch the players. Henry sat with his strong knees well apart, his profile very stern. What a profile! Sometimes it seemed to have cruelty in it. It suggested that he was

"calculating." Well, what of it? That was what had made him successful.

"He drives a hard bargain," her father

used to say.

Miranda could see him saying it, giving an odd cunning tilt to his head, which seemed a kind of substitute for a wink. A hard bargain — that meant unscrupulousness. Henry would have no mercy, would think only of himself.

But how absurd! How could one get anywhere in business, if one didn't know how to make a bargain?

"Fifteen two-fifteen four," said Henry,

and moved the white peg.

"Hurry, little red man!" Isabel cried.

"You're only three behind."

Darling Isabel! Miranda smiled at her as she put the thread to her lips to moisten it. So young! So intent! How small, how ineffably pretty and fragile she looked, sitting opposite Henry! The white coral beads were very becoming to her. They set up an odd relation with the gray eyes, seeming to draw attention to them.

But could one be unselfish in business? Father had been; but father—well, he had not been too successful. Henry's profile might better be called ascetic. His life had for years been almost monastic. His days were long days of hard work, his evenings were solitary and silent. The Gray Farm

-it was well named!

Miranda lost herself, as so often before, in thoughts of the delicious but somewhat frightened adventure of moving herself into it. A butterfly in a fortress! But it

seemed remote, that adventure.

The farm was on a long, bare, green wave of a hill, bleak in the winter, hot in the summer. As she walked toward it, it seemed like an old ship stranded there—perhaps the ark waiting for the return of the dove, of something to put a soul into it. She was the dove, of course, but somehow she could not succeed in getting any nearer to it. The place seemed the reverse of magnetic. It exerted some mysterious influence which kept her at a distance.

Its outline was stern, its frown fell heavily across the landscape. There ought to be trees about it—maples, elms, a rose garden, something gentle, something to tempt a footpath toward it. Henry was

curiously like his house.

"And a pair is eight," said Henry.

"Oh, Miranda! Do look what a beating Henry is giving me!"

The tall clock—Patten, of London, 1756—struck eight, and Miranda rolled up her sewing and put it in the basket. She stood up. Henry took her arm a little stiffly, without looking at her, and they walked into the garden.

"Curiously like his house," she thought.

"The garden needs water," she said aloud.

"I haven't watered it to-day; but it would

be such a bother in the dark!"

Henry, for answer, looked about him in the green darkness. She felt a lightening of his pressure on her elbow. He seemed to fill the little inclosure of fragrant gloom, and to be oddly at enmity with it.

"You haven't told me, Henry, what hap-

pened to Speckle."

"Oh, Speckle's all right. I think she was just pretending—wasn't really sick at all. She's angry with me now. She wants to set, and I won't let her."

" Do let her!"

Her voice died away without conviction, and she realized that it was not Speckle she had wanted to talk about, but—what?

They sat down on the bench under the grape arbor. A grape leaf swung against her cheek, and the furry touch of it, slightly coarse, was pleasant. It belonged to the darkness, to the faint, intimate scents and sounds of the garden, and to the invisible proximity of Henry.

Her heart beat, and she felt a kind of stiffness and blindness. Henry was strained and shy, but the moment was near when he would kiss her. She waited, motionless.

"Do you know what day this is, Henry?"

" No-what?"

"The anniversary of father's death. It was five years ago to-day."

" Oh!"

The interjection was curt, almost angry. It fell upon her like a sharp blow. She pressed her hands hard together. What was the matter? Didn't he like to be reminded of that? She wanted to look directly at him, but did not dare. What she was aware of was that he was leaning forward a little awkwardly, staring before him toward the house.

"Five years ago!" said Henry, suddenly

laughing a little.

His voice trembled; he seemed to be frightened. He began to talk with extreme nervousness, still looking away from Miranda. The first words set her blood violently in motion. She felt weak, and put a shaking hand on the bench.

"Five years! It's odd you said that. It helps me to say—to try to say—what I've got to tell you. It's the five years, Miranda. It was too long. I don't say it was altogether your fault. Of course, I know you didn't think you could leave Isabel; but—it was too long! How could I help it? It's impossible to control these things. Perhaps we were too young when we—you've changed, you know, and so has Isabel. Isabel has grown up. Do you quite realize how beautiful she has become? Do you see what has happened?"

Miranda's eyes were dazzled. A long, bright wave of revelation, a soundless disaster, broke slowly over her, and left her changed. Isabel! So that was it!

"Put them quickly in water, Isabel! They're parched."

Miranda tried to rise, but her knees gave way. She had a senseless desire to run.

"I can't listen to you!" she cried.

"Be sensible, Miranda! You know I'm sorry. How could I not be? But what sort of a marriage would it be—a one-sided thing like that? You know I'm fond of

He touched her shoulder with his hand, and started to put his arm around her. She shrank forward. How she wanted his arm! But it hurt her. She put up her hand and gently pushed it away, shaking her head.

"I'm sorry, Miranda," Henry said again,

appealingly.

His voice was low, he looked closely and gravely at her. She avoided his eyes, but something in his tone, in the fact that he chose at that moment to look, for the first

time, into her face, made her angry.

"You needn't come to see us any more," she said. She meant to speak firmly, but her voice quavered a little. "I give you your freedom."

"Why shouldn't I come? Is there any reason?"

"There's every reason."

"You mean you forbid it?"

" I forbid it."

He looked at her with frank astonishment on his face.

"But why, Miranda? Why?"

" It's impossible."

"Do I have to tell you, in so many words, that I love Isabel?"

"Oh, no!" She gave a short laugh, singularly bitter. "You've said that already. That's precisely why."

"You don't mean to say—forgive me, Miranda—that you're going to be jealous and stand in the way?"

" Jealous? How could I be? She's my

sister."

"But why, if she loves me-"

This fell upon Miranda with cruel force, but she was steady. She kept her way. She brushed the painful thing aside, with a sense, nevertheless, that it had profoundly injured her.

"You forget that she is younger-that

I must protect her."

"Oh! That's it! You'll protect her-

against me!"

They sat in silence. For a moment neither moved. The grape leaf, again swinging gently against Miranda's cheek in the dark, giving her a trembling caress, took her back, for an instant, to a remembered existence now incredibly remote. It plunged her into the overwhelmingly desired beauty of those bygone days. Then, as quickly, with a wrench that tore her very soul out, it brought her back. The past was dead!

"This is very hard for me, Miranda-

don't you see?"

"For you? Yes, I suppose it is." Her words seemed cruel in their emphasis, but she did not regret them. "It's incredible!" she thought.

"Will you be foolish enough to make it

hard for Isabel?"

"I can't see that it concerns Isabel."

"Oh, doesn't it?" Henry obviously felt that he had an advantage here, for he gave an odd grimace, which was perhaps the parody of a smile, and straightened himself. "You see, Isabel loves me."

There it was again! Her lips trembled. Did Isabel love him? She had blushed, but did that mean anything? If it were true, Miranda must have seen it in a hun-

dred other ways.

"Oh, no! You're mistaken," she said

firmly.

"Oh, no! I'm not!" Perhaps he did not intend it, but his tone was almost insolent. He felt this, apparently, for he hastened to add, with exasperating gentleness: "I'm sure of it, Miranda. God knows, I don't like to torture you. It's hideous!"

"Yes, it's hideous! Thank you for the word, Henry. That's why," she said, rising slowly, as if for emphasis, "it can't be—I mean, that you should come here again.

It's out of the question. Be magnanimous—don't blame me. Blame your own—hideousness!" She uttered the word sharply enough, but at once took it back, in a measure, by dropping her face in her hands. She looked up again, however, and went on: "You have been weak with me—you would be weak with her."

"Oh!" He seemed to be weighing the futility of contradiction. "You have no faith in me, now," he added.

" None."

"Well, then, I shall insist!"

" I forbid it!"

"It's for Isabel's happiness as well as for mine."

Miranda looked at him with a sad mockery of challenge. It was as if she had said:

"I know my strength—give it up!"
Taking an indecisive step toward the house, she said, without rancor:

"I think you'd better go, Henry."

They walked slowly across the grass,

consciously apart.

"I shall come next Tuesday," he said; "but I shall come late. Watch Isabel. You will have your proof—if you need any."

To this she made no answer, although it had been on her tongue to say, once more:

"I forbid it!"

She felt that her silence was weak, but she was exhausted. At the door, having possessed himself of his hat, Henry faced her, in the dim light, with an odd extravagance of melancholy.

"Forgive me, Miranda! I've somehow

not said what I meant to."

They looked long at each other—long, earnestly, through a profound turmoil of desolation. He was wondering, she knew, if he ought to kiss her; but she did not waver. She kept the void between them.

"Good night, Miranda," was all he said,

at last.

"Good night, Henry."

He let himself out without awkwardness, and closed the door. She heard his firm harsh steps on the path, the click of the gate, the creak of the chaise wheels, and then, after a moment, the soft knocking of Betsy's hoofs on the dusty road. She stood by the door for a long while, unable to move.

The sitting room clock struck ten, and before it had finished striking the tale was taken up by the village church, with its melancholy, irregular stammer. Miranda's hand, when she lit her bedroom candle, did not shake; but on the landing, where she paused to look out into the dark garden, she was suddenly overwhelmed by a belief that Henry was still there. She had a ridiculous desire to lean out of the window and call him. She imagined it clearly she heard the low, insensate cry of "Henry!"

Grief began beating its wild wings in her heart. She made haste past Isabel's room—blessedly dark—to her own, where she flung herself for a long, silent suffering on

the crucifix of her bed.

TV

It was a week of heavy, moist, oppressive heat. The books mildewed, and had to be dusted daily. The lilac leaves mildewed, putting on a bloom like that of the grape, but unhealthily mottled. Weariness hung in the air by day, and fever by night.

More than once, looking from her smallpaned bedroom window, Miranda saw the most New England of sights—the sharp colonial church spire, blindingly white, incredibly cold and snowy, against a dull, livid cloud. It was a sight that had always delighted her; but afterward, for years, she was to recall it as particularly characteristic of that week. She was also to recall that often, staring thus at the pure steeple and the suspended thunder, she had guessed a conspiracy between this perturbation of the air and her own.

The storm held off. It brought a short shower on Monday night, enough to weigh down the hollyhocks, but not enough to clear the air. On Tuesday morning, when Miranda awoke, and saw the clouds sagging lower than ever, ominously motionless, she thought at once:

"How appropriate!"

She closed her window sharply, and saw—and immediately reproached herself for seeing—the heavens as a rich background for the events of the day. If a storm came, it would be a kind of relief. The noise of it, the mere physical loudness and presence of it, would help to fill the stage, and would take something off her own shoulders.

The week had not been as difficult as Miranda had imagined it would be. The daily ritual had sustained her with its infinite number of small habits and customs, its washings, its darnings, its gentle pilgrimages to the grocery shop, its cookings and table-settings. She had been surprised,

indeed, to observe how much their life—hers and Isabel's—flowered, as it were, out of precisely such homely details. She gave a short laugh when she reflected that it would be easy to predict what either of them was about to say, at almost any moment, by a mere observation of that moment's "duty."

Moreover, the first sharp anguish, with its sleepless night and its dizzy progression of waves of feeling, had seemingly exhausted, for the time, her capacity for further acute suffering. She suffered, but it was a vague sort of suffering, one from which it was not impossible to lift contemplative

eves for a farther view.

She was graver. She knew that; and at times, over the sewing, or in the garden, she wondered whether Isabel had noticed it. Whenever this occurred to her, she made a point of being gay, of indulging in some small, tremulous foolishness of affection or badinage. Isabel was young, and was perhaps unperceptive; but it was true, as Henry had said, that she had grown up. There was always the possibility that she perceived more than, in her youthfulness, she appeared to.

Many times, during the week, Miranda checked and rebuked her own imagination in this regard. Many times she caught herself watching Isabel with a curiosity that was painful, almost passionate, in its throbbed repression, loosing her imagination like a falcon, all too swift and keen, after some stray phrase or some unaccount-

able gesture.

For a day, she thought she noticed a new note—a note of vague insincerity—in Isabel's laugh. How she had racked her brains for quaint things to say, things to provoke the laugh and to hold it suspended, as it were, under the lens! But that had come to nothing. She had convinced herself by degrees that the laugh, and Isabel's habit of dropping her eyes immediately after laughing, were precisely as they had always been—charming and individual. Her suspicions, she decided, were merely symptomatic of her own fever.

A fever of this sort was, Miranda knew, a thing to be conquered. She must overcome it, she must bury it, and over it she must set the whitest and coldest of monuments—white and cold as the church steeple there, against its granite wall of cloud; but she knew that the monument which celebrated her victory, however small and

white it might be, however concealed and secret, or remote amid grass and boughs, would be the altar about which her days would be but a ritual. Her feet would never falter very far from it. She would turn away from it, only to have it the more heavily at heart.

This perception stifled her. She stood rigid, she repressed it. A hundred times, in a hundred ways, she fled from it. Fled from, it took horrible possession of her hands. She felt that she had no control

over them.

V

It was from a sharp physical crisis of this sort, a sudden rhythmic tyranny that seemed to be rising like ghostly, joyless laughter, struggling against silence in her throat, and opening her lips against her will, that Miranda sought escape in the garden. She sought the bench in the grape arbor; but on seeing it she had a revulsion of feeling, and turned away, tearing off a withered grape leaf.

The air was motionless, charged, stagnant. The oppressive and palpable silence was part of a vast conspiracy to make audible the loud beating of her heart.

Perhaps Henry had already left the Gray Farm. He would come late — he would come in the storm. He had consulted his watch and set out, at the calculated moment, planning, she thought, to reach them at half past five. How like him!

It still lacked ten minutes of five o'clock. Thunder began a lazy muttering in the southwest, and a cool breeze set the lilac leaves shivering. A drop fell upon Miranda's forehead, other drops struck at random among the leaves, and suddenly the poplar trees began swirling in the upper air.

What was Isabel doing? The windows must be shut. Miranda opened the kitchen door, and it banged after her with surprising violence.

" Isabel!" she cried.

For a moment she had no answer, save for the sound of leaves, which seemed everywhere to be rushing through the house. Then there came an uneasy step in the sitting room, and Isabel's voice in answer:

"Yes?"

"Are the upstairs windows shut? The storm's coming."

"No. You shut them, Miranda. I'm tired."

Miranda stopped at the sitting room door, and saw Isabel sink into the chair by the front window. Her face was a little pale, and she seemed languid.

"Very well-I'll shut them," the elder

sister said.

As she closed the first window in her own room, a vermilion flicker ran down the sky behind the steeple. Instantly everything grew gray. The hum of rain on the shingle roof, which had been desultory, became

steady.

A violent gust of cold air whirled the curtains about her as she closed the second window. She saw Mr. Lazenby, the sexton, come out of the church door, shut it, and start running down the road, putting one hand up to his hat. How ridiculous he looked! He fled like a ghost, soundlessly, and she forgot him when a second and a third flash wrinkled down to right and left of the church steeple, succeeded instantly by a terrific crash of thunder.

As if in frightened response, the church clock struck five. The thin notes were

blown about like leaves.

Miranda was frightened. Thunderstorms always frightened her; but she was frightened even more at the thought of what awaited her downstairs. It would be

despicable-it would be spying!

She clasped her hands and stood still in the middle of the room. The gleaming edges of furniture, the pale mirror, the dark walls, leaped at her silently as the small room filled and emptied itself of light, like the rhythm of a wild sort of breathing. She waited, however—waited until a blinding flash hung paralyzingly in the room, and a sharp crack seemed to tear the very roof off.

" A shingle ripper!" she thought.

This sent her hurrying down the stairs at a run.

Isabel had not heard her. The younger sister was standing close to the window, staring out at the storm, one hand holding back the curtain, the other lightly touching her cheek.

"Isabel! For goodness' sake, come

away from that window!"

"But where's Henry? He's out in this, Miranda!"

"Don't worry — he'll be safe. He's probably stopped somewhere. I'll bring the lamp in."

The revelation came over her like a dull wind, deflowering her heart. She felt within her, as it were, second by second, the corruption and fall of petals.

"I'll bring the lamp in," she repeated.

But the lamp was forgotten; for at that instant a scream from Isabel made her turn to the window, and she saw the mare, Betsy, galloping past, swinging the empty chaise from side to side of the road. A lightning flash made it horribly vivid. Every detail was wet and sinister—the broken shaft, the draggled harness, lumped mud falling from the spokes.

An accident, Miranda thought, stupefied. She stood motionless and raised her hands idiotically to her ears. Isabel, for all her

pallor, became imperious.

"Come!" she said. "We must find

him!"

She threw a shawl over her head and opened the door, admitting the extraordinary loudness of the rain. She ran out,

lowering her head.

Miranda followed, still incapable of thought. She was conscious, for the moment, only of the rain in her hair and the water in her slippers. How far would they have to go? Perhaps they would meet him. He would be walking toward them, covered with mud, and laughing.

Then, at the same moment, she and Isabel saw the huddled, dark figure under the elm tree, one hand grotesquely twisted out.

"Henry!" cried Isabel.

Stooping, she lifted the unresponsive face against her shoulder. The eyes were staring and motionless.

Could this be true, thought Miranda—could it be as true as that he would presently, out of the rain, walk toward them, laughing, as she had foreseen?

"Quick, Miranda! We must carry

him!"

They carried him into Mr. Lazenby's cottage. Rain pattered on his coat. One of his hands—the one with the ring—dragged in the grass. Miranda noticed that it was red. They put him on the sofa.

"Run for the doctor, Mr. Lazenby!"

"There's no doctor will do him any good,
Miss Holway," said Mr. Lazenby. "He's

dead."

He lighted a candle on the white chimney piece, and went out of the room. Miranda held out her arms.

"You loved him, Isabel!"

For answer, Isabel's head made the slightest of motions against Miranda's breast. They stood for a long while in

silence; but to herself Miranda was saying, over and over:

"And I killed him!"

VI

"Come, Isabel," Miranda said at last.

Isabel rose from her knees beside the sofa, her face pale and distorted with grief, and took the firmly proffered hand. Mr. Lazenby, without a word, bowing his head, opened the door, and they went out.

The clouds were retreating. A long, level, honey-colored shaft of light came under them from the west, as under an arch of basalt, and bathed the wet earth in beauty. Robins were running on the drenched lawns, provocatively singing; but something within Miranda had turned to iron. Something within her had hardened and would never again be sensitive.

"Except ye repent," she heard a slow

voice say in her heart.

In the darkness of her mind she saw a dim altar, a shadowy sort of self-dedication. To move heavily, with Isabel weakly leaning against her arm, toward their small white house, their small sweet garden, was also, she saw, to move toward this altar.

The door was open, as they had left it. Without conscious thought, Miranda mopped the rain water which lay in a shallow pool on the hall floor. Without conscious thought, she set on the table, with an unlighted candle, a loaf of bread and a pitcher of milk.

Isabel sat motionless.

"Eat, Isabel," Miranda said.

As Isabel did not stir, she rose, and, with a singular sense of heartbreak, sliced the white bread. No, she could never tell Isabel that her love for Henry had been returned—never, never!

She closed her eyes for a moment. For some reason she saw herself standing, in a pale light, before her mirror. She leaned against the bureau and stared at the reflected Miranda she saw there—the pallid dark face, and the large eyes, in which a deep torment burned. She saw her fist rise twice, slowly, and slowly strike her breast.

"Oh, monstrous, monstrous!" she heard herself cry in the stillness of her room.

A little after seven o'clock the lights in the church were lighted. A few moments later, against the illuminated glass above the church porch, Miranda saw the silhouetted shadow of Mr. Lazenby reaching up long arms to pull the bell rope. The bell clanged for prayer meeting. She watched the grotesque shadow working silently there. She winced at the slowly reiterated, melancholy sound. It was insupportable!

She lighted the candle, glancing, as she did so, at the tears that ran down Isabel's cheeks. Then the altar of self-dedication at last became clear to her.

She went to Isabel, and put her lips

against her sister's wet cheek.

"We will live always as we live to-day," she murmured. "All our lives we will remain as we were when Henry knew us. It will be a memorial."

Isabel did not need to answer. After the sounds of her grief had become silent, the two sisters, thus conscious of dedication, stared together for a long while at the candle flame which burned before them.

VII

Months passed, years passed, and they kept up their beautiful ritual. The generations changed, new houses and new people came to Stoughton; but the Holway sisters remained always the same, like something over which time had no dominion.

They were their crinolines long after the fashion had departed. Even after they had begun to grow gray, they dressed their hair in the charming ringlets in which they had dressed it as girls. Isabel, it was slyly observed, even painted her cheeks a little; but as she always were a heavy veil, it was difficult to be sure.

When they made, together, their morning journey to the grocer's, punctually, as always, on the stammering stroke of ten, they were greeted everywhere with smiles—smiles of amused tolerance, smiles of pity, smiles of frank derision. Children occasionally mimicked them. They were thought to be slightly "daft."

They lived strictly alone, went to see nobody, had no callers. When they passed through the street, they clung tightly to each other and looked straight before them.

It was not until Miranda lay dying, thirty-one years after the death of Henry, that the story became known. Then she summoned a young clergyman who had newly come to Stoughton, and made her confession to him—for she was still convinced that she had caused Henry's death.

But she made the clergyman promise never to let Isabel know that Henry had returned her love. It is from him that the story comes.

Miss La Plasse Intervenes

REVEALING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MOTOR ACCIDENT IN WHICH HAZZARD WASHBURN LOST HIS LIFE

By Anne O'Hagan

INNER at the Hazzard Washburns' was held back that night from eight until half past because Hazzard had not come home. Then Felicity ordered it served.

She asked me to sit opposite her in her husband's place, and I had a chance to study the change in her since I had last seen her, two years before. All the old beauty was there-the sea grayness of her eyes, the dead-leaf gold of her hair, the pale, fine-textured bloom of her skin; but it was seen, as it were, behind ice, like the color and shape of December grasses through the sheathing of a cruel winter storm.

There were only six guests at dinner. We were to have made a couple of tables at auction afterward, and as a matter of fact we did, in spite of Hazzard's defection. Felicity called up an obliging bachelor in the neighborhood, and we played a few rubbers; but the air was full of unease, and we left early.

Felicity herself took her husband's absence with rather too accustomed a manner. It sent me home wondering what it all meant-the stiff mask of her beauty that had been so alive, so eager; Hazzard's nonappearance, the familiar gesture of her acceptance of it, the far-fetchedness of her

explanatory theory.

"He was to have driven Sir Henry Thorpe out to Roslyn to-day to look at Rosholm Farms. Sir Henry may lease it, his business keeps him so much in this country nowadays. Hazzard has simply been stuck in the road somewhere where it hasn't been possible to telephone. It always happens when it shouldn't-you know how such things are."

The first thing in this explanation that didn't seem to me to square with probability was that Hazzard Washburn should drive a client, even a Sir Henry, out to look at property. I could not envision Hazzard treating the real estate business in which he had recently bought a partnership

so seriously.

Furthermore, I couldn't believe that there was a spot on Long Island from which a man, or a commandeered passing messenger, could not reach a telephone in the four hours between half past seven, when Hazzard should have been at home to dress for dinner, and half past eleven, when Felicity's seven guests pressed her slender little hand, looked into her greengray eyes, and said good night. It seemed to me far more likely that Hazzard, off on a spree, had forgotten all about his engagement at home, and that Felicity knew itknew it from experience.

How she had changed from my first

recollection of her!

I had not known her well, to be sure, but she had seemed to me the sort of girl whom it would be easy to know and understand - eager, happy-hearted, an altogether charming type. I had been best man at the sudden wedding in Rome with which Hazzard, just out of the aviation service, had crowned a whirlwind wooing.

He had met Felicity in a French hospital to which he had been sent for some minor repairs, and in which she, only a year or two out of a French school, had been acting as a helper. The armistice had come, she had joined her mother in Italy, and the young man had followed. According to his breezily autocratic habit, he had refused to be delayed in his desires, and I had been drafted into his service for the ceremony in the American church. She had been a perfect bride, and Hazzard had been enough in love with her to justify the hope, even on the part of those of us who had known him a long time, that he was going to settle down.

How she had changed!

I remembered that I had noticed the beginning of alteration when I had next seen her, eight or nine months after her mar-We were all back in the United States then, and a bunch of us had gone down to Washburnham with Hazzard, to take from the ancestral farmhouse, which he had just sold, any family relics that

piety might dictate.

Not that Hazzard's piety wanted any of " Junk," he called them the old things. all, and he was unconcealedly bored with Felicity's caprice of ancestor-in-law worship — that is, he was bored with it until he saw in it a chance to organize a motor party for driving down to Maine. Hazzard had always been mad about motors, from the time when he had run away from St. Luke's to play mechanic to Bud Dewar at the Ormond Beach races. Also, like so many of his generation, he was mad about " parties."

Felicity had been lovely and shiningeved on that autumn trip, but even then I noticed some diminishing of her air of glad expectancy. The reticence that tonight clothed her like a cast had been beginning to form about the mold of her happy confidence. I had wondered then if she had begun to find out Hazzard's utter

untrustworthiness.

П

It was only a short walk from the Washburns' apartment on Park Avenue, in the Sixties, to the rooms I had kept for years in an old-fashioned house on Beekman Place, overhanging the East River; but I had barely got home, changed my tail coat for a smoking jacket, mended my cannel coal fire, and settled for an hour's work,

when the telephone rang.

I was a little astonished. I had been back from Russia so short a time that practically no one knew that I was in New York. It was the merest chance meeting with Felicity that had taken me to the Washburns' that night. Who could be ringing me up? The importunate "wrong number," I suppose; but it was Felicity's voice at the other end of the wire-Felicity's voice, sweet, heavy, dead.
"Rick," it said, "it is I—Felicity Wash-

burn. Rick! Rick! Will you come back,

please? There has been an accident. By and by-by and by-they will be bringing -Hazzard—Hazzard home—his body-

I called a taxi, and I was with her in ten minutes. She was as we had left her, in her dinner dress of gold tissue, with the narrow, straight band of pale willow green in her gold hair. I saw now that there had been a little make-up on her face, for, slight as it had been, it stood out in high relief against the new marble grayness of her skin.

"At a railroad crossing," she said to me, very steadily. " Hazzard was driving. The hospital where they were taken-in Long Island City — telephoned. They said—they said — it was instantaneous." She closed her eyes against an intolerable vision, and her rigidly held body shook for a second. "Instantaneous-they said so. The other man-"

"Sir Henry?"

"I suppose so. they think. I—" He is only stunned,

"For whom else have you telephoned?

Where is your mother?"

"Mother?" She looked at me stupidly, as if the word meant nothing to her. "Oh, mother! She is in Tokyo."

Of course I might have known it. Mrs. Emily Van Benthysen was to be met on all the fashionable promenades of the world except those of her own country.

"Any of Hazzard's people?" I suggested. "There isn't any one, you know," she

reminded me.

I remembered, with the irony of it salttasting upon my lips, how at the wedding in Rome we had congratulated them because of their enviable lack of "in-laws." Except for Felicity's mother, there was no one with the immediate right of entry into their lives; and Mrs. Van Benthysen, it was quite certain, would never exercise hers. To-night that isolation, once so spirited and free, seemed a forlorn thing.

"But you must have some friend," I

"Yes, I have, but he doesn't answer his

telephone-Michael Rolfe."

Michael Rolfe! That was the name of the man who had bought the old Washburn place at Washburnham, the queer stick who had played host to our lively party on that chilly, golden autumn day two years ago. I had a confused jumble of recollections and surmises when Felicity spoke his name-spoke it in a new voice, where life stirred again; but he was a preposterous suggestion, a man, a recluse, an impractical, an artist.

"You must have a woman with you," I told her. "You know a thousand women."

"I haven't any women friends," she answered simply. "Not near enough friends for this."

I remembered the years of Mrs. Van Benthysen's expatriation, and the list of Felicity's Swiss schools and French convents-all that unrooted life in which there had never been time, anywhere, for friendship to send tendrils through the soil.

She watched me a little anxiously, and

then she said:

n

e

n

d

f

"Unless, maybe, your sister? She has always been so sweet to me."

"Why didn't I think of her at once?" I cried, and telephoned my sister Kate.

While we waited for her, I begged Felicity to lie down, to call a maid, to change her dress-anything to break the tension of waiting; but apparently she could not bear to leave the big, brightly lighted drawing-room, with its Chinese lacquers and teak, its forced peach blossoms burgeoning out of great jardinières of Royal Medallion, its screens and ivories.

When I had been ushered into that room before dinner that evening I had marveled at it, and had known it at once as no room of Felicity's making or choice. I remembered the sincerity of her enthusiasm over the furnishings of the old house at Washburnham—the sturdy mahogany dressers, the rush chairs, the blue Staffordshire and pewter in the curved corner cupboards. When we had reached the attic, on the day that was so clear and insistent in my recollection, she had turned to her husband with her face all alight.

"Oh, Hazzard," she had cried, "but this is perfect! This is what I have always dreamed of, even if I didn't know it! One's own place, one's own people! The things they used! Couldn't we-couldn't we "her smile, shy and daring, had trembled toward the new owner-" buy it back from

Mr. Rolfe?"

Michael Rolfe, tall, thin, a little ungainly, thirty-four or thirty-five years old, had

been sympathetic and embarrassed.

"Of course," he said in a stumbling, hesitant way, "if you really mean that, Mrs. Washburn—"

"Mean it?" Hazzard had interrupted noisily. "Mean it? You're crazy with

the heat, Felice! What the dickens would we do with this place—at the end of the earth, and not even any good hunting or fishing? We'd be nuts, plain nuts. That is "-he had suddenly laughed his goodhumored, boisterous laugh, as he caught the amused gleam in Rolfe's eyes-" since we're not-writers? No? Not a writer? Well, painters then, like the new owner. It's ideal, a godsend, for an artist, of course; but for a roughneck, a business bandit-

His big, boyish voice came booming back to me as I waited with Felicity for him to come silently home to this exotic place.

Kate arrived, practical, mothering. She got Felicity out of the room, roused some servants, and made her change her clothes; but the young widow refused to lie down, to rest. She came back to us, to move aimlessly about, more blanched than ever in a long, straight-hanging robe of dark velvet, with some white fur at the high neck and at the wrists of the long sleeves. Her eyes were burning, and her slender body was held rigid, as if she feared to move, lest motion should wake her to some more dreadful reality than the dreadful dream in which she waited.

The telephone rang in the hall outside the drawing-room. I answered. Morning Star wanted to know if Mrs. Washburn could furnish its interested readers with the name of the woman injured in the accident. It seemed that she was still stunned and unable to account for herself.

I guessed "Lady Thorpe," to the profane amusement of the inquiring reporter.

"Nope!" he demurred. "I know hershe's the head of 'steen publicity grabbers' committees. She's sixty, and severe. Unless she's dropped about forty years, and taken to strong drink and loud dress, this isn't Lady Thorpe. Hold on a minute!"

I held on. Presently he came back to

the telephone.

"All explained, old man," he said with cordial intimacy. "We just got the dope from the doctor in charge here, at the Long Island City Hospital. She's Miss Poppy La Plasse. She's engaged to Michael Rolfe, the painter, the other man in the smashup. He has come to, and has told them all about it. Sorry to have troubled you. Good night and thanks!"

Both the women were questioning me with their strained eyes as I returned from

the telephone.

"It—it seems that the other man wasn't Sir Henry," I said. "It was Michael Rolfe; and the woman was the girl he is engaged to, Miss Poppy La Plasse, if I got her name right."

Kate protested.

"Rolfe engaged-Michael Rolfe?"

She broke off suddenly. Felicity had risen, and, with a hand at her throat, as if she would tear it open for air, she was swaying on her feet. I sprang forward and caught her as she fainted.

Ш

It was not until after Hazzard's funeral that I thought to ask my sister the reason for her astonishment over Michael Rolfe's engagement.

"I didn't know you knew him," I said; "much less that you knew him well enough to have opinions about his affairs de cœur.

Where did you run into him?"

"At the Washburns'," Kate answered slowly; "and at Ned Hammitt's. He's an old friend of Ned's. They studied together abroad, and used to go knapsacking through the Black Forest, and all over. He—Michael Rolfe—has had a studio for the last year or two in that old Eleventh Street rookery where Ned has his; but it was at the Washburns' that I saw him oftenest. It was only three or four times at that, I dare say, but it seemed oftener. There is something about him that makes you feel old friends with him—something sympathetic, honest, understanding."

"But why were you so astonished to hear that he had succumbed to the universal law? Why were you surprised at

his engagement?"

Kate looked uncomfortable.

"I don't exactly know," she said. "He's quiet and retiring—not shy, you know, but quiet. He doesn't go anywhere. He stays in town very little. He simply isn't the sort of man who could by any stretch of the imagination be expected to be engaged to a person called Poppy La Plasse."

I remembered the look, the coming-alive look, with which Felicity had told me the name of her one friend. I remembered how she had fainted when she had heard that that friend and his lady love were with her husband on the fatal drive. I tried to revise my recollections of Rolfe, to build up another sort of person than the quiet, kindly, awkward man who had bought the old house at Washburnham. I tried to fit the

imagined figure of a Miss Poppy La Plasse into that house.

What had the Morning Star man said about her?

"Strong drink and loud dress-"
I could not piece the puzzle together.

IV

FELICITY was going through the apartment, listing the things she wished to keep when it was sold; but she said, almost impatiently for so gentle a woman, that she wanted to keep nothing, nothing at all.

"There's nothing in it that means Hazzard or me," she told us. Kate and I seemed to have become next of kin. know the things are lovely, and all that; but we took the place over from the Carys just as it stood. He had lived in China for years, you know, and it all means something to them; but not to us-not a thing! I didn't want it, but Hazzard-you know the place where he lived, the things about him in the house, never seemed to mean anything to him. He didn't care, provided he could be comfortable-expensively comfortable. If it had been somebody's Jacobean apartment that had happened to fall vacant just at that time, we would have taken it, or a Florentine. The place where he lived wasn't his home to him-it was just a sort of club." But there was no criticism in her thoughtful voice, and she ended wistfully: "He belonged so much more outdoors than in, didn't he?"

I agreed. I thought, as I said yes, that she seemed to be opening for Hazzard dead a door in her heart that she had closed to him living. Oh, well, we all do that, and thereby make the tragedy of life and death!

"And there's nothing here of mine," she went on practically. "I never had anything—one school after another in Europe, and summers traveling with mother, and then those two years in the hospital. Of course I haven't anything of my own—anything with associations, that is; so it might as well go as it stands, just as we took it from the Carys."

We were at the door of her room. Kate was looking in. More lacker, more Chinese embroidery, some temple hangings covering a bed; but on the wall opposite the bed there was a painting.

"Don't you want that landscape, Felicity?" Kate asked. "It's a beauty."

My eyes followed the direction of my sister's. It was a painting of the old house

How artists do such at Washburnham. things I've no notion, but somehow that two-foot canvas was poetry and history. An autumn light diffused itself through the landscape, soft and warm and golden. The house, its century-old buff paint peeling and rubbing from its ancient pink bricks, seemed the very heart of all the color, the center from which the glow of beauty radiated. A lawn, bleached by early frost to russet, a stubble field grayed and yellowed, stretched down to a tidal river blue as the waters of Italy. Labor, fruition, hospitality-the sane record of a wholesome race-lived in the painting.

"It might have been done the day we all drove down there, Felicity," I said.

"Do you remember?"

I I

; sa-! withdi-

e

e

d

d

-

f

t

She nodded, her face twisted with pain. "It was," she said shortly, her lip quivering a little.

"You'll surely want to keep that?" said Kate, going closer to it. "It's—why, it's one of Michael Rolfe's!"

"I don't want to keep it," Felicity replied steadily. "Let it go with the rest

of the things."

But when I read a catalogue of the objects offered for sale by the estate of the late Hazzard Washburn, Esq.—for the purchasers of the apartment had not, after all, wanted the Cary furnishings—I noted that there was no painting by Michael Rolfe listed. So Felicity had decided to keep the picture, after all!

V

MICHAEL ROLFE, hobbling on a stick, for he had sustained some torn ligaments as well as a brief concussion in the accident that had cost Hazzard his life, came around to Beekman Place to see me one night. It was the night of the day when the Morning Star and other well informed public prints had published the announcement that on Wednesday next Mrs. Hazzard Washburn would sail on the Olympic to join her mother, Mrs. Emily Van Benthysen, in Algiers. We made conversation, congratulating Rolfe on his recovery-he had had to remain in the hospital some time, hadn't he? A very terrible experience. Poor Washburn! Always a reckless driver-and were the findings at the Had he been drinking? inquest correct? Too bad, too bad!

"And, oh, by the way, congratulations

on your engagement, Rolfe."

"Thanks," said the painter, obscuring his thin face a trifle behind a cloud of smoke.

"I begin to think of myself as the sole survivor of a once flourishing tribe," I remarked. "I'm the last of the bachelors. Are you to be married soon?"

"The date isn't set yet," he replied.

He reached over to the little stand of contraband and seltzer, and poured himself a rather stiff drink.

"Felicity — Mrs. Washburn," he said, after he had swallowed it. "She—I see she is sailing next Wednesday. Is she—is she well? Is she—making a good fight against the shock, the sorrow? Will she be long abroad?"

"She'll be away indefinitely." I could not keep my amazement out of my stare as I answered. Felicity's friend - her one friend of that night of waiting-was asking me, the mere chance comer into her affairs, about her! "She has borne up very well. Of course, she looks stricken, but she's young and strong and courageous. She keeps herself in admirable control. But good Heavens, man! Forgive me if I am impertinent, but I thought you were an intimate friend of hers-of theirs. She said so that night. You were the first person of whom she thought, the first person for whom she telephoned. She told me so, when she sent for me. Is it possible-"

I broke off. After all, I had no right to question a man who was practically a stranger to me about what was possible or impossible in his friendship with any

woman

Rolfe looked at me, a queer brightness in his blue eyes, a sort of boyish, shy smile about his sensitive mouth.

"You're not impertinent," he said. "Certainly not, when I come here and try to pump you about her—about Mrs. Washburn. We were friends, all of us. Washburn had a lot of good points. Of course, I didn't really see very much of him—or her. I am in town only three or four months in the year, and I'm not keen on society, and society returns the compliment." He grinned likably. "They went about a lot, and I didn't really see them much; but we were friends—friends from the first, from that day at Washburnham. You know—the instant sympathetic feeling that takes the place of years—"

He fell silent, his eyes on the fire in the grate. I kept on staring at him. Finally

he looked up, met my eyes, smiled again that shy, magnetic smile of his, and said:

"I—I suppose it would be hard for her to see me, I'm so mixed up in her tragedy, her loss. Anyway, she won't do it—she won't see me. She won't even answer my notes. I don't altogether wonder. By and by, when it isn't so new, her wound, her loneliness—"

"Rolfe, you're in love with her!" I cried, boundlessly intrusive, shaken out of every decent tradition of reticence by the amazement of my discovery.

He flushed, but looked at me steadily

enough.

"I suppose so," he said. "I suppose so; but she—she doesn't know it. I have never wanted anything from her, Muirhead—not a thing, except perhaps the chance to stand between her and—the hurt of waking up. I wanted her to feel that I—that some one—was there beside her, if—if things ever got very hard—with Washburn, I mean. He—he was pretty raw at times, you know," he added apologetically. "Good fellow, too—likable, lovable, and all that."

He got up, fumbled with a book opener on the table, smiled his queer, winning, hesitant smile, and bade me good night. After he was gone I thought of three or four intelligent, logical questions which, if he had answered them, would have helped in clearing the muddle in my mind—and perhaps the muddle in his mind, too.

I went to see Felicity at the Plaza the next day. I was greatly minded to play Providence, though I was not quite sure to whom, and certainly had no idea of how to do it. I felt that it was too bad of her to wound that good, sensitive fellow, Rolfe, because of any fine-lady squeamishness that could not bear reminders of the horror of her husband's death. Rolfe was in love with her, though, by some obscure but common sort of mischance, he was engaged to another woman. She ought at least to be civil to him. She couldn't be such a fool as to imagine him in any way responsible for the disastrous joy ride.

In the impersonal, barren luxury of her hotel sitting room I saw the picture which, after all, she had not put up for sale. She watched me look at it.

"I couldn't let it go," she said to me simply, candidly. "It was Hazzard's own place, his own people's; and I—I loved it so that day. I seemed to belong there. It was the first time in my life that I ever had

that feeling of being at home, of being where I belonged."

She looked about the room in which we sat, with its gilt-spindled chairs and its blue satin. I thought how her eyes had shone upon the old wooden cradle in the Washburnham attic.

"Rolfe came to see me last night," I announced baldly.

Felicity stiffened. She brought her eyes back to me from dreams. She flushed slowly.

"Yes?" was all she said.

"Aren't you — aren't you treating him rather badly, Felicity?" I asked her. "It seems he's been a friend of yours and Hazzard's, and it wasn't his fault that he got mixed up in your mind with Hazzard's death. I don't think you're behaving well, if you'll let me say so. It wasn't he that was driving. He's been laid up himself for two months. I don't think you ought to indulge yourself in morbid antipathies."

"I am much obliged for your opinion," returned Felicity, in a tone that implied no sense whatever of obligation.

"I apologize, Felicity, if that's the way you feel about my speaking my mind."

I wasn't going to quarrel with the girl. She had been through a horror, and she had a right to her nerves and her moods. Besides, I had been a little intrusive; but at my words she turned a sweet, broken face upon me and cried:

"Oh, Rick, how can I be such a cat—to you, who have been such an angel to me through all this—this hell? To you, when you are not only yourself, but dear Kate's brother? Please forgive me! Please forgive me!"

"Felicity, my dear!" I began.

My speech was cut short. Down the narrow hall of her suite, leading from the big hotel corridor outside, came her maid with a half wrapped garment streaming tissue paper.

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but there's a lady says she must see you."

"But I left word at the office-" began Felicity.

Over the maid's shoulder appeared a woman's face. Into Felicity's speech another voice struck—not an unpleasant voice, but deep-chested, luscious, and soft, though the pronunciation smacked of another world than Felicity's.

"Excuse me," said this voice. "I wanted to see Mrs. Hazzard Washburn, and I

didn't ask anything about it at the desk. Instead, I crossed the elevator boy's hand with silver, and he set my feet on the right path. This is Mrs. Washburn?" she added.

"Yes," said Felicity. "It is all right, Delia. I will ring for you when I want you. Go on with the packing. And now" -she turned to the intruder-" who is it, please, and what can I do for you?"

"You can ask me to sit down, for one

thing."

The caller did not wait for Felicity to act on the suggestion, but sat, a pretty, dark, plump creature, about thirty, richly colored, softly curved, a little overdressed in sumptuous fabrics and furs.

"Well, as for who I am, I am Poppy La

Plasse," she announced.

FELICITY stood, slender, fine, and pale, the delicate, aristocratic articulateness of her body emphasized by her filmy mourning, and by the suggestion of ripe vulgarity in her visitor. Her lips parted. The hand which was resting lightly on the back of a little gold chair closed upon it with a sudden force that threw the knuckles into spots of livid white.

"I do not think that you can want any-

thing with me!"

I had not supposed that a quiet voice, uttering a few commonplace words, could possibly concentrate into them such bitterness, such hatred, even; and yet the pretty, richly cheap-looking woman did not seem to me to merit it. Of her sort she wasn't so bad; but Felicity couldn't be expected to recognize that, I supposed. Besides, her scorn was probably directed through the woman to Michael Rolfe.

"You have another think coming," said Miss La Plasse in her gurgling, juicy voice.

"Felicity," I interrupted, "do you want me to call for the house detective and have this woman-"

"No," said Felicity. "No, Rick; but please stay. If she really has something to say to me—"

My suggestion of the house detective had given the visitor pause. She had been in the act of diving into the very largest gold-mesh bag I had ever seen, and until Felicity answered me her hand remained inside it. Now it came out with a little packet of letters. She flashed me a look of triumph and defiance as she proffered them to her hostess.

"Look at those!" she said.

"No," said Felicity, with infinite distaste. "I do not care to read letters not

intended for me."

"Oh Gawd, but mother was a lady!" gibed Miss La Plasse. "Well, all right, then, for a minute! You'll look at them by and by, I guess; for I'm here to tell you that I'm going to sue the estate of the late Hazzard Washburn for fifty thousand dollars for injuries sustained by me when he was driving an automobile while drunk. and for another fifty thousand in payment of a certain contract he made with me-"

"A contract? With you?" I struck in. "Uhuh, deary!" Miss La Plasse nodded her head, swathed in a turban of gold with a paradise feather sweeping to her shoulder.

" Uhuh!"

"But I don't understand," said Felicity. "A contract? With my husband?"

A light began to glimmer through the murk of my mind.

" Hadn't you better see Mrs. Washburn's

lawyers?" I asked.

"Not yet," replied Miss La Plasse non-chalantly. "I thought we might like to settle the matter, her and me, quietly, without any publicity, like ladies should. When I read in the paper that she was sailing for Europe, I thought it was time-"

"I-I don't understand," said Felicity

again.

She was sitting now, all fine-spun gold and black and white, in one of the blue

stuffed chairs.

"I'll explain it fast enough," said Poppy. "I can see what sort of throws you off. It's this story that that poor, good simp, Rolfe, told, about him and me being engaged. I don't wonder. It had me kind of dazed myself for a while. I give you my word that I never had a morning after like the one when I woke up in the hospital and learned that my fiancé is Mr. Michael Rolfe, a gentleman I never laid eyes on until the afternoon before. I've been some quick little worker in my time, but that would have been my fastest. I'll tell you the real way of it. Hazzard and I-"

Felicity winced, but the narrator did not

notice that.

"Hazzard and I, on our way out to a friend of mine's down at Babylon, are stuck in the jam up by Queensboro Bridge, and he hails a queer-looking dub who's standing on the sidewalk. He begs the queerlooking dub to come along with us, though

I couldn't for the life of me see the reason. It didn't look to me like he'd add much to this gayety of nations you hear about. But Hazzard "-she looked intimately at Felicity-" you know how set he was on his own way, after he'd had a few drinks. There wasn't any use in objecting, so I didn't object; and by and by this Rolfe gave in and came along with us. Next morning I come to and hear that I am engaged to him-to Rolfe, I mean. What's the answer to it, I ask him when I have a chance to go into the room where he's laid up and we get the wide-eared nurse out. And he tells me the answer. You're the answer!"

She nodded at Felicity.

" I?"

"Yes, you! His friend Hazzard, it seems, had got a pure and trusting wife whose heart is going to be broken anyway by what has happened, but who simply wouldn't be able to live at all if she knew -well, what she would have to know about Hazzard and me, unless I was explained some other way. So he had taken the liberty, he said, of claiming me himself, and he hoped I wouldn't mind a little acting in a good cause. He said he'd seen I was a good-hearted girl, and Gawd knows I am. And then he says that we needn't go on with the engagement afterward. It was just to be temporary, to save your feelings. I was feeling pretty shaky that morning. I'd had the closest call I ever had, and it looked to me as if the handwriting on the wall was telling me to make a change; so I said to him, no. If we were engaged, him and me, we'd be engaged in earnest. I kind of liked him, at that. There was something nice about him. I said we'd go right through with it. I said I wasn't going to be made a mere convenience of for any lily of a woman, no matter how lilyish she was, and no matter how good-hearted I was. If we were engaged to be married for her sake, we'd be married for it-and for mine. My, but a home and a husband of my own looked good to me that morning! He said very well, if I was game to play it through to the end, he was game, too. Anyway, you had to be spared.

She turned to Felicity, who sat leaning forward, her eyes glittering like green fire,

her cheeks aflame.

"But, girly, what a fool I'd have been to go on with it! He's a perfect gentleman all right, but dull. My word, but he's dull! No taste for any sort of pleasure. He's poor, too. There's no money in art, that's plain. I couldn't afford it from a business point of view. So when I read in the paper yesterday about how you were sailing for some place or other next Wednesday, I just thought I'd come and talk things over with you, woman to woman. Two women, two ladies, I says to myself, can arrange things without any undesirable publicity or any lawyers butting in. I hoped you'd be the kind you are-refined and sensible, so that you wouldn't want a Gawd-awful row any more than I would myself. You don't really need to have anything against me. Hazzard was a dear fellow, I'll tell the world that; but fickle-my word, he was fickle! It wouldn't have been any time before he was as false to me as what he had been to you. That was why I made him sign this little paper." Again she extended her little packet. "There's some love letters, toojust to show you-"

"I don't want to see it," said Felicity.

"Give it to Mr. Muirhead, please. Rick, if it's true—if she has anything that Hazzard ought not to have signed, anything silly, disgraceful—my poor, foolish Hazzard—I'll buy it back. And accident damages—you settle everything with her."

She walked away to a window, and stood looking out across the snow-patched park and the tangled glitter of a Fifth Avenue

afternoon.

I glanced through the little bundle of letters. Hazzard had been a fool, there was no doubt about that. I read enough, and then I met the avaricious anxiety in the woman's eyes with my best poker stare. Mrs. Washburn, I told her, would give her exactly five thousand dollars in settlement of all claims against Hazzard's estate.

She made a perfunctory outcry, but by and by she went away with Felicity's check tucked into the top of a gorgeously clocked stocking, and, I surmised, with triumph in

her heart.

"Poor soul!" Felicity said, dismissing the woman from her life. Her eyes were shining. "She didn't want to marry Michael—did you hear her, Rick? Oh, Rick, did you ever hear of any one so wonderful—as he is, I mean? So kind and crazy—so chivalrous, so quixotic? Oh, I thought I should die that terrible night when it seemed as if he, too, was like other men—false to themselves, untrue, unreal. That was why I couldn't—wouldn't—see him or

listen to him. I ought to have known better, I ought to have known better! To think anything base of Michael Rolfe—what a fool I was! To have thought that he was, at bottom, the same kind—for of course, Rick, I had known from almost the very first how it was with my poor Hazzard. But Michael!"

Her deepest heart was in her eyes and in

her voice

When, two or three weeks after she had sailed for her decorous winter of mourning with her mother, I read in my *Morning Star* that Michael Rolfe, the eminent land-scape painter, was booked by the next

Wechesday's steamer for Gibraltar, I thought how much more efficient in their generation are the children of darkness than the children of light. For my vision of the Felicity of the future, eager, shining, beautiful, with all her old expectancies again, standing in the doorway of the house that had been benignant mother to so long a line—Felicity become a golden link in the golden chain of life—I knew that that prophetic vision showed me what was, after all, in some fashion the creation of that light-hearted daughter of unreality, that draggled dancer along the world's tawdry thoroughfares, Miss Poppy La Plasse.

The Happy Valley Cups

A GOLF CLUB STORY ILLUSTRATING GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP
AND SPORTSMANSHIP OF ANOTHER KIND

By Oliver Peck Newman

If Ashton Barr had devoted more time to Dorothy and less to the factory it might not have happened. It might not, I say, and that, of course, is only my guess. Numerous members of the Happy Valley Club, especially the porch chair brigade, contend that it would have happened anyway, because Dorothy is that kind of a woman.

Personally, having reached a venerable age at which I'm looked upon as an old fogy doctor with nothing to do, whose only patient is the Happy Valley Club, now a full-grown youngster which he reared by hand from birth, by virtue of being chairman of the greens committee, I try to be tolerant in my judgments of men and women. I don't know whether Dorothy is that kind of a woman or not.

Neither do I know what kind of a woman she would have been if Barr had been as attentive to her after they were married as he was before. I do know that along about the time their boy was sent away to school, after reaching an age which gave Dorothy an occasional few minutes in which she could think of something besides croup and bottles and gocarts and measles and other nerve-consuming problems of motherhood, Ashton was putting his business over the last hill to big success, and was leaving his wife, in her renewed youth, to find happiness wherever she cared to look for it.

I don't even know that she looked for it at first. Neither do I know what passed between them on the few occasions when she enjoyed the pleasure of his society in the little bungalow up on Chestnut Hill; but I was painfully conscious of the exact moment at which the bridge players' tongues began to wag on the clubhouse veranda.

I had watched, from a distance, Dorothy's whirlwind rush from flirtation to flirtation through a furious year. It was a series of affairs which crept frightfully close to the verge of scandal, bowling over husbands and wives with an abandon almost fiendish, and leaving susceptible young college boys writhing in agony by the wayside, the despair of their worried mammas. It caused Dorothy to be tolerated with thinly veiled disapproval by our young married women and adored by our short-skirted, slim-ankled, silk-stock-

inged, slang-using, cigarette-smoking, bobhaired, free, easy, and mysterious young daughters, known colloquially as the débu-

tante bunch.

I recall a day when my tolerance received a severe bump, almost getting away from me altogether. In searching for a ball which I had sliced into the woods along the south side of No. 4-in spite of McPherson's patience in drilling me for years against gripping tighter with my left hand than with my right-I heard a voice, which I recognized, in the little arbor over the spring behind No. 9 tee, on the other side of the timber, saying things which a less hardened sinner than I would have been bound to listen to.

I was not a deliberate eavesdropper. I had a perfectly legitimate right to be where I was. I was looking for my ball-and at the present prices of those rubber spheres, one doesn't abandon a comparatively new one for any little thing like a sense of chivalry, especially under such circumstances as I have described. So I kept on hunting, and the voice I had heard came to my ears in limpid, full-throated cadences, interrupted occasionally by another voice-which I also recognized-masculine, husky, boyish,

eager. I had not heard that Dorothy had woven the spell of her charms about young Donald Foster, one of the finest, manliest boys of our little colony, recently back from Paris, where indulgent parents had sent him to finish his course in architecture; but it was apparent that she had done so, and that the youth was hopelessly entangled in the

lovely web.

"I tell you we must!" pleaded Don. "You've got to listen to reason. We belong to each other-we were created for each other. You must free yourself from him, and—"

"Listen, dear," Dorothy said to him, in a voice which probably fired his impetuous young heart to blissful agony. "You don't understand. I do love you, and I know that you love me. You are a dear, sweet, adorable boy, and you make me frightfully and deliciously happy, and I'd just love to run away with you to the ends of the earth; but-but-you don't understand. not practicable for me to get a divorce. I can't-"

"But I want you, forever and ever!" he went on. "I can't stand this deception. My love for you is too-"

Just then I found my ball by stumbling over a log and coming down with both hands in a clump of weeds, in the center of which the ball was resting. The voices ceased at the crash.

I called my caddy, dug out with my niblick, and played a perfectly rotten game the rest of the way around, proving beyond question the fallacy of the statement so often heard around country clubs that when you're playing golf you can't think of any-

thing else.

I was disturbed by the fragmentary sentences I had heard issue from the arbor. Before he went to Paris, Don was supposed to be engaged to Margery Wainright, the daughter of an old friend and colleague of my professional days, who, like me, had retired to Green Hills a few years before. So far as I had heard, the engagement had not been broken off. Margery, who was my favorite among all the young women of our happy circle, was, or had been, devoted to Don. On his side, he had loved her sincerely, and during the first part of the month that he had spent at home he had shown her as much devotion as ever.

I could not help feeling that what he proclaimed so vehemently as his love for Ashton Barr's wife was merely a boyish infatuation for an older woman. Dorothy Barr was unquestionably attractive, and in the game of hearts she was what I understand the generation of to-day designates

as a vamp.

As I dubbed around the remaining fourteen holes, I could see Margery's lovely face, hurt and shamed, as I knew it might be now, or must be soon, if Don's infatuation for Dorothy continued. Goodness knows, I have lived long enough to learn not to meddle in other people's affairs; but those two glimpses of Margery, one real and the other fancied, together with the knowledge which my accidental eavesdropping had put in my possession, aroused in me a feeling of responsibility which I could not ignore.

Fate helped me more than a little. On the club veranda, after I had taken a shower and changed my clothes, I found the usual late afternoon crowd of idlers. Most of them were gathered around the bulletin board, discussing the announcement of the annual mixed foursome tournament, which I had posted earlier in the day.

This event is our most important contest of the year, carrying with it the fine gold cups donated by the first president of the club, and being open to all golfers of amateur status. Because we have always had among our members some of the best men and women players in our section, we have always managed to keep the cups at home; but we have always had to fight for it. Every year the crack golfers come trooping down to Happy Valley to lift the cups, and it has become a matter of thrilling pride with every Happy Valley member that they are still ours, and a perpetual boast that we will always hold them against all comers.

The moment I appeared, people began to bombard me with inquiries and requests:

"When will the pairings be announced?"

"Please pair Dick and me!"

"Don't pair me with a man who throws his clubs!"

"Who's coming from Lakeside and Long

I parried all these attacks, and laughed and joked with the crowd, but all the while I was looking for somebody who didn't seem to be present. Finally I got away from the veranda, to hunt through the parlors and library, and out into the driveway and parking space, which was filled with cars. I had about concluded that she was not at the club, when I glanced through a window toward the home hole and saw a lone, drooping figure on the bench beside the green, with her head turned toward the west and her eyes looking wistfully down the course. It was Margery Wainright.

П

ALTHOUGH a sharp ache went to my heart at sight of Margery, I was not surprised that she had stolen off by herself to that particular spot, from which she could catch the first glimpse of people playing up No. 18, as soon as their heads appeared above the hill four hundred yards away. At my approach she turned, and her face lighted with what I am vain enough to think was pleasure.

"Hello, doctor!" she said, and moved over to make room for me on the bench. "Have a good game to-day?"

"Not very good," I replied. "I was off in all departments—driving, approaching, and putting. I didn't see you on the course."

She turned her head away quickly.

"No-o, I didn't feel like playing to-day," she said with uneven voice.

I made no comment, but watched her closely. In a moment, feeling my gaze, she turned toward me again, and I saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"What's the trouble, little girl?" I asked.

"Can't you tell your old friend?"

Margery winked quickly to drive back her tears, caught her breath sharply, and replied:

"No-nothing-it's nothing."

"Where's Don?" I asked suddenly.

"He's out on the course, playing withwith Mrs. Barr."

I touched her gently on the arm.

"Margery," I said, "let me see if I can help you. Perhaps I can, if you'll tell me all about it."

"Nobody can help me," she answered in a low, strained voice.

"Margery, do you care for Don, and do you care if he plays golf with Dorothy Barr?"

"Yes—no! Of course I don't care who plays with him. He has—"

"Do vou love Don?"

She looked into my eyes for a long minute without speaking, and then the floodgates of speech burst. Poor girl, she had been bottling her trouble up in her own heart so long, aching with the urge to confide in somebody, that her words came tumbling out in confusion—but also, I could

see, with a sense of great relief.

"Oh, doctor!" she said, pressing both hands to her heart. "I love him so much that it just hurts and hurts and hurts me in here until it seems I cannot stand it. I loved him the very first minute I ever saw him, and I've never changed, except to love him more each day than I did the day before. When he went away to college, I loved him. When he came back, I found that I loved him more than ever. Then, when he went to Paris, I loved him. I thought of him and prayed for his success all the time he was gone. When he came home, a month ago, I was so happy I thought the world was just the most wonderful place to be. My heart was so full of joy that it ran over, and I loved everybody in the world. I thought God had picked me out to make me the most joyous, perfectly contented creature in the universe. Don was home, his study days were over, he was going into business for himself, we were never to be parted again, he loved me, and all my whole life was to be one magnificent day of gladness. Oh,

doctor, he loves me now—I know he does! I don't have to be told. I know it, just as you know your mother loves you. This madness for Mrs. Barr—oh, doctor, I can cure him if he'll only let me! He is just fascinated."

"What about her?" I asked.

"Does she love him, do you mean?"

" Yes."

"No! No! She doesn't love anybody. She-oh, it's no use trying to make a man understand it, but a woman can-I do. Doctor, perhaps you can understand if I explain it this way, and please remember that I'm not just being mean and catty, but that I know. She isn't square. She isn't a good sport. She doesn't play fair. She doesn't know how. I know, because I'm a woman, and she's trying to destroy my man just for her own selfish amusement -not because she wants him. She doesn't want him. She wouldn't have him. She couldn't stand him-because he's straight and honest and decent. She would be tired of him in a month. Oh, don't you understand, or do you just think that I'm a mean, jealous cat?"

"I understand perfectly, my dear," I told her, "and I agree with you. Don amuses her, and she is playing with him for a little while. He is attracted because she is unlike most women he has ever known."

"Of course he is, doctor. That's ex-

actly how it is."

"But suppose she did love him, and real-

ly wanted him to keep?" I asked.

"That would be different," replied my young oracle. "I wouldn't feel toward her as I do. Why, if I loved a man and wanted him for all time for my very own—why, there's nothing I wouldn't do to get him!"

"Well, you love Don that way, don't

you?"

" Yes."

"Then let's get him back."

" How?"

I gazed down the long, beautiful sweep of rolling green fairway and saw two figures, close together, moving slowly into the first shallow valley of No. 18. I could not be certain, at that distance, whether they were arm in arm or shoulder to shoulder but I recognized Dorothy Barr's blazing red jacket and Don Foster's gray knickerbockers. I knew, too, that many other eyes were looking down the course from the clubhouse, and my rage at the young imbecile for such a blind display of his in-

fatuation, with the consequences it carried for Margery, rose again.

I looked at her. She, too, was watching the slowly sauntering couple, and seemed to have forgotten her question of the moment before.

"We'll see if we can't find a way," I said, in answer to her query. "In the meantime I think we'd better run along home, unless you want to stay here and scratch her eyes out."

Margery smiled and stood up.

"I'm not ready to do that just yet," she replied. "Come on—I'll drive you over to your house."

Unobserved, we slipped around the clubhouse to her car, and five minutes later I was bidding her good night at my front gate.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," I said. "Maybe we'll think of something to do."

"Thank you, dear doctor—and thank you for understanding. I feel better for telling you. Good night!"

I watched her until a bend in the road cut her off, and then went in to dinner with a confident chuckle. I thought I had found the answer.

Ш

I sat up late that night, making the pairings for the tournament, which was to begin on the next day but one. Entries had closed at six o'clock the evening before, and there was a goodly list of star golfers. Of course, entrants from the other clubs were already paired, but I had quite a job balancing the men and women of Happy Valley into an effective team.

We had half a dozen men and two women who were universally conceded to be our best players. The two women were Margery Wainright and Dorothy Barr, and one of the men was Donald Foster. Indeed, the year before Don went abroad, he and Margery had won the cups in a race horse finish from behind, against an alien couple who had come mighty near lifting our cherished trophies. It was, therefore, sound logic to pair them again, and the club expected it.

That was half of the reason for the sensation which raged through the clubhouse all the next afternoon, when the pairings had been posted, and it was found that Don and Margery were not to play together. The other half was the fact that I had paired Don with Dorothy Barr.

My, how the whispering gallery buzzed! The news was taken as a flat repudiation of Margery by her supposed fiancé, for everybody assumed that Don had asked to be allowed to play with Mrs. Barr. To make matters worse, Margery was paired with a good second-rater—Jack Hammond, a steady, dependable golfer, but a man who could never show the brilliance demanded of a cup defender should he reach the semifinals or finals.

Murmurs of criticism reached my ears, for everybody realized that we should have to play better than we had ever played before if we kept the gold cups in the face of the avalanche of stars from all over the State who had swooped down to wrest our proud possessions from us. As the pairings stood, it looked as if Margery, one of our two best women golfers, would be sacrificed in the first or second round.

I had only one moment of anguish. That was when Margery, after running down the list of players on the bulletin board, turned to me with mute misunderstanding and questioning in her eyes. Even that, however, did not deter me. As she passed me with a group of friends, on her way to the first tee, I whispered:

"Trust me!"

Her face brightened a little, and I determined to see the play through. Neither Don nor Dorothy Barr made any comment to me, although they drove off together in another twosome as I awaited my turn that same afternoon. Don looked at me several times with a puzzled expression; but whatever his thoughts, he kept them to himself.

The annual mixed foursome tournament at Happy Valley always brought into the gallery not only every golfer who could get there, but hundreds of nonplayers, who knew the history of the gold cups and came to pull for one club or another. On the two days of the contest the place was thrown open to the golf world; but never was there such a crowd, or such interest, as on the occasion of which I write. Everybody in the club was keenly conscious of the existence of the Margery-Don-Dorothy triangle, and before the close of the first day it seemed as if almost everybody else The very atmosphere was knew of it. charged with a high voltage of excitement and expectancy.

On the first day, a Thursday, young Foster and Mrs. Barr, playing almost perfect golf, walked straight to victory in both rounds, defeating one of the crack visiting twosomes four and three in the forenoon, and a team of clubmates two up in the afternoon. By an unexpected flash of form, Jack Hammond, with able assistance from Margery Wainright, also won both rounds. They put out a team from Green Hills by one up in the morning, and barely nosed out a hard-playing pair from Lake-side on the nineteenth hole in the afternoon. A thirty-foot putt by Margery ended what had been a grueling battle from the first tee, in which neither side had ever been more than one up.

Of course, Margery was the heroine of the afternoon, and I was delighted to observe her modest gratification—the gratification that every good golfer feels when he knows he has played a good round; but the strain had told on her. In spite of her cheerful manner and the smiles with which she accepted congratulations, I knew that her heart was heavy. I felt more than a little conscience-smitten at the tiny lines between her eyes and the droop of her mouth when her face was in repose.

The leaven, though, was working. My heart warmed when, on the terrace above the eighteenth green, in the presence of scores of club members, Don walked rapidly from the score board over to Margery, broke through the group of people who were lionizing her, and seized both her hands.

"Fine, Marge, fine!" he exclaimed.
"Gee, that was great! You played a corking game! I'm glad you won!"

An instant later he seemed to feel a sudden embarrassment. Allowing others to claim Margery's attention, he went back to Mrs. Barr. Later, after dinner, when the clubhouse rang with laughter and gayety, he slipped away with Dorothy in his car—for a moonlight ride, I presume—and did not appear again that night.

Nevertheless, he had revealed his joy at Margery's success, and had instinctively gone to her at the right moment. I did not feel discouraged. I had no regrets over the course the tournament was taking.

Our other teams, however, had fared badly, being roundly beaten by their visiting opponents, so that the semifinals opened on Friday morning with Dorothy and Don facing a strong pair of Waveland players, and Hammond and Margery pitted against Cal Birch and Mrs. Frank Lloyd, from Long Hills—the very team that came so near to victory three years before against Don and Margery. A large gallery followed Margery and Hammond, because everybody felt that their forenoon round marked the crisis of the tournament. If they could squeeze through, it was believed that the cups would be safe, for every one was confident that Don and Dorothy would win their match. If, however, Hammond and Margery lost, then Don and Dorothy would have to meet one of the best pairs in the State in the final struggle for the

gold cups.

Our worst fears turned out to be well grounded. Margery Wainright stood up like the magnificent golfer she is; but at the turn, where they were two down, Jack Hammond broke under the strain and went clear off his game. Margery fought valiantly, bringing into her play a reserve of power that even I did not know she possessed; but a two-ball foursome is a difficult game at best, and with one player dubing shot after shot, and going to pieces on the green, only one result is possible. That result came on the seventeenth green, when Hammond missed a three-foot putt, which gave the match to Birch and Mrs. Lloyd by three and one.

Ten minutes later Don and Dorothy came into sight on the seventeenth tee. Dorothy driving off first, and thereby revealing to us that they had the honor, and presumably the advantage. Her confident stride, and the clear, clean swing of her drive, which sent the ball straight down the course, told me that all was going well with

them.

How well we discovered when they came up to the green. They were two up, and a half on the seventeenth hole gave them the match. This meant that they must carry the honor of the club and the duty of defending the gold cups in the finals against Birch and Mrs. Lloyd in the afternoon—a responsibility which would test both their morale and their golfing abilities to the utmost.

IV

I TOOK Margery under my wing for the rest of the day. Being chairman of the greens committee, I was a sort of privileged character, whose presence on the course, fairly close to the players, would not be questioned. I wanted Margery to have a close-up of the game. Three thousand people trailed along the fairway behind us, or

clustered on the hills which rim or crisscross most of our holes.

Don won the toss and drove off first—a perfect drive, with just the suggestion of a pull to fight against the slight right-hand slope of No. 1. His ball came to rest just opposite the two-hundred-and-fifty-yard marker. Birch laid one only a few yards short of it, and the two women got out their mashies for the short, sharp pitch uphill to the green.

Thus began the tightest game of golf ever played at Happy Valley—a game which stands unparalleled in the annals of our club. Stories of it will go down from generation to generation of golfers, and will be repeated in golf heaven, if there is

such a place.

It was even fours to the turn, with every hole halved; and there was not a fluke or a freak play on any one of the nine. Old Colonel Bogey himself might have been swinging the clubs for each player. It was the kind of golf you play with your eyes shut, just before you drift off into dream-

land at night.

The first break came at No. 10. Dorothy, whose turn it was to drive, topped her ball, and it bounced into the rough, which extends across a slight incline for a hundred and fifty yards. We saw it plop into the stiff, wiry Bermuda grass about half-way through, and our hearts sank. Every Happy Valley player knew the difficulty of getting out of that rough. Few did it with one stroke, for the rigid, tough stalks of the grass turn the blade of the club. Many a golfer has chopped at his ball in that grass for five minutes and then given up in disgust.

Birch got off a clean, straight drive of about two hundred yards. I noticed that Dorothy, who was sitting on the players' bench, jumped up and watched it eagerly, her driver tightly clenched in both hands

and her lips trembling.

Don slowly drew his niblick out of his bag and waded through the Bermuda grass in leisurely fashion, while the others, followed by their caddies, took to the path which skirted the rough. All halted opposite Don, who, when he reached the ball, looked at it critically, walked around it, got in front of it, and kneeled down to squint at it. Then he turned to his caddy, handed him the niblick, and said:

"Give me my brassy."

The gallery gasped. Dorothy, who had

been moving about nervously during Don's inspection of his lie, whirled about with an angry gesture.

angry gesture.
"You're crazy!" she cried. "Take your

niblick, and be sure and get out!"

Don looked toward her in astonishment for a moment. Then he silently took his stance, lowered his club carefully to within about six inches of the spot where we presumed his ball lay, came back slowly, and swooped down with a giant swing and a perfect follow through. To the amazement of every spectator the sphere came out clean and whistled down the fairway a hundred and fifty yards, coming to rest within a foot of his opponents' ball.

"It was teed up beautifully in the top of a weed with three prongs," said Don, as

he rejoined his fellow players.

"You've no business taking such chances," Dorothy said sharply. "If your stroke had gone under it, we'd have been ruined, for I could never have got out!"

Again an expression of astonishment spread over Don's face. Criticism from his partner, especially as he was about to attempt a delicate and difficult shot in a crisis, was something in the ancient and honorable game which Don did not understand. He had been taught that it was not good

sportsmanship.

Dorothy did not seem to realize that she had committed any offense. She apparently accepted his silence as an admission of guilt, and went on with the game as if nothing had happened. I could see, however, by the curious expression of Don's face whenever he looked at his partner, that he was doing a lot of thinking, and I was fearful lest it might affect his play. Judging by results, however, it did not.

Of course, Birch and Mrs. Lloyd had Don and Dorothy playing the odd. The latter had taken two strokes to their opponents' one, and the balls were lying almost side by side; but No. 10 is a par five hole, and the Happy Valley part of the gal-

lery felt as if it was not lost yet.

Our hopes were not realized. All four players made perfect strokes the rest of the way, but neither gained an advantage, and the hole went to the visitors, five to six, making them one up, and giving them the honor for the first time in the afternoon.

On the eleventh and twelfth holes the perfect mechanism of the players again came into action, and both were halved in par fours. By this time the spectators

were on the verge of hysteria, produced by the apprehension that some one of the golfers was likely to break at any minute. American amateurs—even good ones, like the four we were watching—simply cannot stand the strain of such a tight battle. The breath and breeding of the stoic Scot is not in them. No long line of sturdy golfers stretches back through their genealogy to give them stamina. Everybody knew that somewhere, before the home green was reached, one or more of the foursome would blow up.

V

Such was the situation when the two couples climbed up to the high tee on No. 13. This is our long, hard hole, with a hundred yards of rough in front of the tee, a shallow valley beyond, crossed by a tiny creek, another rise for two hundred yards beyond the creek, and a hidden green in a second valley, trapped on both sides, the whole flanked by a rough hogback on the right and a ditch on the left.

A pull on No. 13 puts you into the ditch. A slice lands you on top of the hogback, in the rough, or, if it doesn't reach the top, gives you a hanging lie, from which it is almost impossible to make the second hill. A short drive lands you in the creek, or leaves you a hanging lie for an uphill second. A good, clean, straight drive puts you over the creek into beautiful, open fairway, from which it is an easy two to the top of the hill or beyond; and after that a running approach downhill to the green is simple.

It was Birch's honor, and he got off another of the magnificent drives he had been making all the afternoon. His ball stopped just at the foot of the slope beyond the creek, in the center of the course.

Don drove off for his side, and my heart sank as I saw his ball begin to curve to the right after what looked like a perfect start. His anxiety, the effect of Birch's drive, the rankle of Dorothy's criticism, and the strain of the whole situation had finally got

to him.

It was a bad slice, carrying the ball to the rough, exactly on the top of the hogback, but well down the course. If he happened to get a good lie, there was one chance in a thousand that Dorothy could reach part way up the second hill with a mid-iron, and then there was another bare chance that Don could avoid the traps and

make the blind green with another iron

Margery and I had followed the players up to No. 13, and stood several yards behind them when they drove. We now trailed Don and Dorothy along the hogback, at a discreet distance.

Dorothy walked ahead of Don, with rapid, jerky steps, and swung her driver

viciously.

"How in the world did you get up here?" she demanded, speaking sharply over her shoulder, just before they reached the ball. "If you weren't going to clear the creek and drive straight, why didn't you take an iron and play short?'

Don trudged after her without answering, his head down and his shoulders hunched. We stopped when they reached the ball, and we saw Dorothy kneel down, put her hand to the ground, and carefully and slowly draw something out of the weeds and stones with which the hogback is covered.

"Here, don't do that!" we heard Don exclaim.

The gallery, all but Margery and myself, were on the hillside to the left of the fairway, two hundred yards away. Birch and Mrs. Lloyd were down in the valley, picking their way across the little creek. Even we were too far away to see clearly what Dorothy was doing, but not too far to hear what she and Don were saying. In the state of mind under which she was laboring. I think she was oblivious to our proximity.

"You can't do that!" said Don. "We're in the rough, and are not allowed to move

anything."

"Nobody can see us," she replied unconcernedly, "and now I've got a perfect lie."

Don put his hands on his hips and stared at her with his mouth open. Then he glanced back guiltily toward us, and stepped aside for her to make her shot.

I knew, as well as if I had been on the spot, what had happened. She had come upon her ball, had found a stick or stone or some other obstruction nestling close behind it, as so frequently happens, and had carefully removed it, leaving the ball clear to be picked up with her iron. I also knew the effect that such an action would have on straight-playing Don Foster, and I chuckled in the bottom of my heart.

Win the cups by crooked play? Lose

them by the wild game of a young golfer who had seen an ideal go to smash while he struggled through a cup defense contest? Yes-either one. Gold cups and country clubs meant little in my old life that day. I was gambling with human hearts!

Margery turned to me with the light of dawning comprehension in her eyes.

"What did I tell you about her?" she demanded.

I made no answer, for just then Dorothy Barr drove, and my contempt of the moment before was drowned in my admiration for her nerve and skill. Putting everything she had into her swing, but keeping her eye glued to the spot from which she had just removed the little obstruction, she picked the ball up with a terrific stroke which carried it almost to the top of the hill, a good hundred and seventy yards in a direct line to the flag.

A clatter of applause greeted the shot. Birch and Mrs. Lloyd waved congratulations from the valley, and the procession moved forward. Mrs. Lloyd got off only a fair brassy, evidently pressing a little because of the moral effect of the hill in front of her, and her ball stopped several yards short of Dorothy's. This meant that Don would be able to see the green for his approach, while Birch would have to pitch to a hidden flag.

The latter's approach, however, was good. He made the green, overrunning the hole about twelve feet, and leaving his partner a downhill putt. They were certain to be down in two, and had a chance for a one-which seemed to satisfy them.

VI

THEN it was that I beheld the most curious play ever made on the Happy Valley course—a play which but four people, Don, Dorothy, Margery, and I, were ever destined to understand. Don Foster, one of the best golfers of the State, especially noted for his short game, walked up to his ball, laid his short approaching cleek behind it, settled himself in his stance, drew back his club slowly, brought it down again with a firm swing, and missed the ball altogether!

Mrs. Lloyd, Birch, and the gallery gasped with amazement. Dorothy Barr went white with rage. Margery and I looked

at each other and smiled.

"You fool!" Dorothy muttered. "What did you do that for?"

Birch and Mrs. Lloyd were out of earshot, but Margery and I were not.

"You know damned well why I did it," Don quietly replied.

So did Margery and I. We saw in it the boy's determination to make what reparation he could for his partner's dishonesty without a public scandal.

Again Dorothy showed her golfing nerve. After lingering for an extra minute in the caddy's vicinity, as she drew a mashie from her caddy bag, and thereby gaining control of herself, she stepped up to the ball, and laid it dead to the hole. This left Don a ten-inch putt for a five, with her opponents twelve feet away in three.

Mrs. Lloyd could not resist the temptation to try to hole out in four—which would make them two up, and would probably cinch the match. In the difficult try down hill she overran badly. Birch missed his putt coming back, picked up his ball, and tapped his opponents' ball into the cup, conceding them the hole, and making the match all square.

The events on No. 13 seemed to furnish the break needed by the nerves of all the players, and on the fourteenth they settled again to par golf. Two fours were recorded. On the fifteenth two par fives were marked down, and on the sixteenth—the short mashie pitch to the island hole—two twos, each side making a birdie.

That another break would surely come on No. 17 was the thought in every mind as the four players stepped to the tee and Don reached into the sand box for a pinch of sand.

Seventeen is our Jonah hole. Golfers come from far and near to play it, and remain to curse it. It is an elbow hole. The fairway runs straight away from an elevated tee for a hundred and seventy yards, and then makes a right-angled turn to the left and runs two hundred yards to the flag, a smooth, unobstructed course except for traps to the right and left of the green. Inside the elbow, paralleling the fairway and making a similar right angle, is a creek, whose banks on both sides are heavily wooded. The left bank of the creek is out of bounds.

Nine players out of ten use an iron to the right angle, brassy up the course toward the hole, run on to the green with an approaching cleek, and are pleased to make a par of five. The tenth tries to clear the elbow of the creek and the woods with a mighty drive, land on the fairway beyond the right angle, get on in two, and hole out in four. It takes a one-hundred-andninety-yard carry to make it, and nobody dreamed that it would be attempted in such an even, air-tight match as was being played that day.

A wave of astonishment, therefore, swept over the gallery when Don picked out his driver, teed his ball, and took his stance away from the straight course, showing that he was going to stake the match, the cups, and his reputation as a golfer on that one shot.

"Don, you're crazy!" cried Dorothy.
"Put up that driver and take an iron.
Don't you dare try that!"

The young man apparently paid no attention to her. He tilted back and forth a time or two, from toes to heels. He swung his driver out slowly toward the creek elbow, like a pointer sighting a bird. Then he brought it back and rested it lightly on the tee directly behind his ball.

A confident smile played about the corners of Birch's mouth. Dorothy sat tense, with compressed lips. Margery, who was standing beside me behind the tee, suddenly gripped my arm fiercely with both hands. I heard a sharp, sibilant breath intaken through her teeth, and then I beheld the arc of Don's driver like a scimitar flashing in the sunshine.

So intent was I in watching the young man that I failed to follow the ball. He had made a marvelous stroke, which the sweet nip of the club's head against the ball had clearly announced. He had followed through with perfect rhythm, and now stood poised, arms and club extended beyond him, turned gracefully at the hips until he faced the elbow of the creek.

For a moment there was breathless silence. Then a mighty roar rose from the gallery on the far side of the course, beyond the angle, telling us that he had carried the woods to the open fairway.

"By George, old man, that was a beauty!" said Birch, with sincere and generous admiration.

Don nodded his thanks and sat down, without a glance toward Dorothy.

The significance of the play was instantly apparent. It was Mrs. Lloyd's turn to drive. Of course, she could not attempt to duplicate Don's feat. She was bound to play straight down the course—which meant that it would require two more

strokes for them to reach the green, whereas Dorothy could probably reach it in one. Don's wonderful drive prophesied, to players and audience, the probable end of the contest, carrying with it the retention of the gold cups at Happy Valley for another year.

Mrs. Lloyd made a good, clean drive, well out into the course beyond the angle. Birch followed with a screaming brassy straight up the groove, but short of the green by fifty yards. Dorothy made one of her best strokes of the day, reaching to a point just off the green in a straight line to the flag, from which position Don laid the ball dead, giving her an easy putt for a four.

Mrs. Lloyd approached neatly, but they had to take two putts to hole out—which made Don and Dorothy one up with one to go, and gave them the match when No. 18 was halved in par. Birch and Mrs. Lloyd promptly shook hands with their opponents and congratulated them on winning. The big crowd, banked on the terrace overlooking the home green, rushed down to seize Don Foster and Dorothy Barr. They were not quick enough, however, to blot out a little incident which my watchful eye beheld.

Turning from Mrs. Lloyd and Birch, Dorothy held out her hand to Don.

"Partner, I congratulate you," she exclaimed. "You played a wonderful game!"

By this time the mob was on them, but I saw him stare at her as if she had been a stranger, turn away, and brusquely push through the crowd to the clubhouse.

VII

We always wind up our mixed foursome tournaments with a dance, and none was ever gayer than the ball of that Friday evening. The gold cups occupied their snug resting place, in the little cubbyhole built for them in the mantel over the center of the big fireplace. Dorothy Barr was there, radiant and vivacious, the center of attraction. Don was there, too, but he danced little, spoke seldom, and seemed embarrassed when congratulated.

At ten o'clock, when I was called into the secretary's office for a meeting of the greens committee, to adjust some financial matters connected with the tournament, Margery Wainright had not arrived. At eleven o'clock, when I went back to the ballroom, Don had disappeared; so I started on a still hunt out of doors.

After looking among the automobiles, I strolled around the clubhouse, on the side shaded from the moon, and approached the bench behind the lilac bushes near the eighteenth green. I beheld the backs of two figures, one light and the other dark, seated very, very close together. The left arm of the dark figure seemed to be holding the light figure close, and presently a small hand crept up over the right shoulder of the dark figure. I made out two heads, bowed and quite close together, and I heard a muffled feminine voice, much happier than when I had last heard it on that same bench

"I'm not sure whether I can ever forgive you or not," it said. "I'll think about it, and I shall take a long, long time to reach a decision. I'll give you a reprieve, and perhaps—some time—if you're very, very good to me, and—and everything, then perhaps I'll decide to give you a full pardon!"

I turned and crept silently back to the clubhouse. I was just in time to see Dorothy Barr, hair and scarf blowing, eyes shining, climbing into an automobile with Cal Birch.

Perhaps, after all, the porch chair brigade was right in saying that it would have happened anyway, because Dorothy is that kind of woman.

SUNSET AT SEA

To-NIGHT, behind a veil of mist, the sun, A molten crimson disk, ignites the sky From north to south along the horizon's edge In one vast blaze of glory. For a while The sea's wide waste of solitude, late green, Is painted in a vivid ruddy hue That turns it to a wild, weird sea of blood.

Obligations

CONCERNING THE FEES THAT HOPE AND FEAR AND PAIN AND HAPPINESS COLLECT FROM US ALL

By Elizabeth York Miller

Author of "The Greatest Gamble," "The Ledbury Fist," etc.

VIRGINIA O'DARE, the daughter of a lawyer in Little Rock, Arkansas, runs off to play with the children of poor neighbors. She is swinging a boy named Nicholas Wayne when the swing breaks and Nicholas is thrown to the ground, apparently lifeless. Virginia flies home in terror, but does not confess her escapade to her parents, though she accuses herself of having killed Nicholas and suffers torments of remorse.

Malcolm O'Dare, her father, gets into political life, and is appointed an attaché at the American Embassy in London. Here Virginia, now a beautiful girl of twenty-one, becomes engaged to a young English baronet, Sir Nevill Davies. Going to Paris with her mother and her fiancé, to shop for her trousseau, she meets an artist friend, Fedor Chiostro, and visits his studio; and there she encounters Nicholas Wayne, whose murderess she has so long considered herself. Nicholas, though not killed, was badly crippled, and he is now a struggling art student. When Virginia tells him who she is, and asks what reparation she can make him, he implores her to marry him. Seemingly moved by some irresistible obsession, she does so, deserting Nevill Davies almost on the eve of their appointed wedding day.

Davies almost on the eve of their appointed wedding day.

Virginia's parents return to America, broken-hearted, and her friends lose sight of her. Two years later she is living with her husband and her baby daughter, Cherry, in a cottage at St. Cloud, outside of Paris. They have two lodgers, Lonny Collins, a former English jockey, and his daughter, Marietta. Nicholas earns a scanty living as a restorer in the palace at Versailles, but his health is poor, and he becomes too ill to work.

Mrs. Shaw, who is a cousin of Nevill Davies and an old friend of the O'Dares, learns where the Waynes are, and when she tells Nevill he goes over to see Virginia. He is shocked to find her in dire poverty, but Nicholas will not accept help.

XIX

BOUT two weeks later Molly Shaw decided she had better write the letter which Nevill had been urging her to send to Edith O'Dare. She had not actually refused to write it at once, but argument caused a little delay.

In Molly's opinion, Nevill was trying to interfere in something which, strictly speaking, was none of his business. He met this by agreeing. Yet whose business was it, then? Certainly Virginia's parents must be in ignorance of the way she was living, or they would not allow it.

"Then why," asked Molly, "doesn't Virginia write to them herself? I don't think I should meddle, if I were you."

But there came a moment when she had to do as Nevill wished, or he would have gone flying over to Paris again. Indeed, he had been the poorest sort of company since that visit of his to the poverty-stricken cottage. Molly told her dearest friends, in confidence, that he was heading straight for a lunatic asylum.

He clung to her because he could talk to her about Virginia, and little by little she got the whole story out of him, including a part which has not been narrated before, and of which Virginia herself was in ignorance. This had to do with what happened after Nevill said good-by to her and her husband and started, presumably, to wend his way back to Paris. It was a very important part of the story, and had a direct bearing upon his reluctance to pursue the matter personally.

The O'Dares had gone back to their pretty home at Chevy Chase, in the outskirts of Washington. At least, that was where they went after leaving London; and though almost two years had elapsed since then, and Molly had not heard from Edith

Copyright, 1923, by Elizabeth York Miller-This story began in the April number of Munsey's Magazine

in all that time, she addressed her letter there.

It was the most difficult letter Molly Shaw had ever written in her life, and she hated her task so much that she shed tears over it. Apparently it could not be composed in a fashion that suited Nevill, who insisted on seeing what she had said. His censorship took out of it any small enjoyment Molly might have extracted from the disagreeable matter.

The finished product ran in this wise:

DEAREST EDITH:

I have often wondered at not hearing from you since you went home, and have meant to write; but so many things have happened, and I've been so terribly busy, and so sad, too. Perhaps you didn't hear of Tom's death. He died this sum-Perhaps you mer after a very sudden and short illness, and you may imagine that I feel pretty blue and lonely.

Poor Nevill, who has been in India for some time, came home to help me out over the tire-some settling up of things. A fortnight ago, when he was in Paris, he heard some news of Virginta that rather disquieted him. I hope you'll forgive me for writing to you about it, Edith, but Nevill thought you and Malcolm ought to know, and he

urged me to write to you. Fedor Chiostro told him that Virginia and her husband were rather hard up. Nevill went to call on them in St. Cloud, where they are now living. Wayne, I believe, is employed in the galleries at Versailles, doing something to the pictures-varnishing them, or touching them up, or something. Nevill doesn't quite know what his job is; but it can't be any too well paid, for Nevill says they are living in real poverty, and there is a baby. Nevill wishes me to tell you that their poverty cannot be exaggerated. When he arrived, Virginia was down on her hands and knees, scrubbing the kitchen floor.

Of course poor Nevill is terribly shocked and upset, but it is impossible for him to do anything. Something most unpleasant happened after he left Instead of going straight back to Paris, he decided to dine in St. Cloud. Some hours later he was still in the village, sitting in front of a café, having coffee and smoking, when suddenly this Nicholas Wayne came limping along-I believe you know that the man is very lame—and when he saw Nevill, he stopped and made a rude remark to him. I dare say Wayne got it into his head that poor Nevill was hanging around St. Cloud on the chance of seeing Virginia again-which, of course, is most absurd. As if Nevill would have done anything so undignified! Anyway, that was how Virginia's husband took it.

So, of course, poor Nevill's hands are tied. It is rather terrible, and we felt that you ought to be told. I don't know their exact address, but if you will write to Virginia in care of Chiostro, and address your letter to him at the International Club, Avenue St. Marc, Paris, Chiostro will see that she gets it. No doubt Virginia would accept help from you when she couldn't or wouldn't from

anybody else.

I must close in haste, to catch the post. The Majestic sails to-morrow.

With best love to yourself and Malcolm-and do let me hear from you, Edith!

Yours,

MOLLY.

Even this was not entirely satisfactory. There was too much "poor Nevill" in it to suit his taste; but since Molly announced that it was positively her last effort on his behalf, he let it go. He posted it himself, and felt a little happier when it slipped into the pillar box, and he knew that within four or five weeks they must certainly have a reply.

What a fool he had been to "hang around St. Cloud" after saying good-by! For despite Molly's scornful assurance that he was incapable of such a low motive. Nevill knew that he had been unable to tear himself away simply because, by remaining, he was somewhere near Virginia, and might possibly be lucky enough to catch another glimpse of her, since he had heard it mentioned that she had some marketing to do. Being ignorant of just where Virginia marketed, he was unlucky in choosing the wrong neighborhood, and more unlucky in being discovered by Nicholas.

The episode had been distressing. his report to Molly, Nevill had merely mentioned "Wayne's insufferable rudeness." As a matter of fact, Nicholas had not been rude, exactly. He had laughed loud and mirthlessly, and had exclaimed:

"What ho? If you're waiting for Jinny you'll catch your death of cold; but if you

like I'll trot back and tell her."

"Thanks-I'm not waiting for anybody," Nevill had said. "No objection to my sitting here, I suppose?"

"Sit wherever you please," Nicholas had retorted, "so long as you have a clear

understanding."

And then he had limped off. Nevill waited a good half hour after that, just to show himself, and any one else who might be interested, that the incident had left him quite unmoved.

But with Nicholas it had been different. He went on down the crooked little street suffering no one knew what tortures. His body was racked with pain, which for several days he had been trying to subdue by various forms of mental treatment, chiefly consisting of assuring himself that it was all nonsense, and that he hadn't the slightest intention of succumbing to anything so trivial as forked lightning playing up and down his spine.

That afternoon, however, with the coming of Nevill Davies, the thing had defined itself for what it was, and Marietta's tale of seeing the two together holding hands and falling on each other's shoulders had got between Nicholas and any remaining perspective of values concerning his own physical condition. He had hoped to walk it into quiescence, and then he came upon Nevill lingering like a hungry dog, driven off, yet not out of sight, unable to forsake completely the bone of his desire.

It was the proverbial last straw where Nicholas Wayne was concerned. Virginia had never cared for him—of that he was convinced, now. She had married him—why? Dear Heaven, couldn't somebody

tell him why?

d

is

n

e

it is it is in the

n y d

1

One day he would take her by the shoulders and shake the answer out of her. Perhaps he would do it to-night. He felt savage enough, but not physically able. She would let him shake her—oh, yes! In imagination he could see her with her head bobbing helplessly, and with the wild, surprised look he had once or twice frightened into her eyes; but would she answer? And if she did, would he like to hear what she might have to say?

A gust of warm, sickish air blew out from an open doorway, and Nicholas heard Lonny Collins's silly, cackling laugh. It was the Café d'Or, Lonny's favorite retreat on a Saturday night—or on any other night,

but particularly on a Saturday.

Nicholas limped in and greeted Lonny, who was somewhat taken aback to be thus confronted by Mr. Wayne in the enjoyment of low companionship. There was sawdust on the floor—Nicholas remembered that—also cuspidors. There was a tall bar with shelves of bright bottles behind it, and a little, fat, businesslike madame was serving.

Nicholas ordered cognac for himself, and still more cognac. So absorbed was he in the process of ordering and imbibing that he quite forgot to offer Lonny a drink. Then, suddenly, it came over him that he had had enough cognac—perhaps a little more than enough. An occasional glass of vermuth or a pint of wine with a festive meal had heretofore been the limit of his indulgence.

The forked lightning playing up and down his spine did its part to steady him. He could have drunk gallons that night, he told himself, and still have remained reasonably sober. Indeed, he would have given much for anything that could have shut off that consuming play of fire.

So now he limped home, staggering a little, groaning much. His brain ran a dizzy riot between what he had to say to Virginia and what the doctor—whom he must see to-morrow—might have to say to him.

The palace at Versailles, with its hundreds, thousands, millions, of inane, stupid portraits! Who cared whether they survived or not? And his own masterpiece not yet painted! Oh, no, his own masterpiece was a burning bush with a pearly path down the middle—the doctor's priceless beard, just finished this afternoon. Thank Heaven it was finished! And so, for the moment, was Nicholas Wayne.

XX

Weeks went by, and Molly Shaw received no answer to her letter. Finally Nevill cabled to Washington, to a mutual friend, and got back the information that Malcolm and Edith had started on a trip around the world two months previously, by way of California, the Hawaiian Islands, and Japan. They would probably be heard from eventually, but it was uncertain when, and Virginia's problem was of the immediate present.

By this time Chiostro, bestirred by conscience—since some of the responsibility would appear to be his—had gone out to St. Cloud at Nevill's instigation, and had returned with a report which seemed to bear out the statement that things are never so bad that they cannot be worse. Nevill had thought it bad enough when he found a famished Virginia on her knees, scrubbing the floor. Now, according to Chiostro, the Waynes were in such a plight that soon there might be no floor to scrub. He had left a hundred-franc note on the dresser, and had gone away tearing his hair.

Sitting in the comfortable lounge of the International Club, Nevill and he discussed the situation and, incidentally, Nicholas Wayne. Nevill had made an effort to set aside his personal feelings as far as Fedor Chiostro was concerned, although he had a distinct grievance. Chiostro seemed to think that the great tragedy was not that Virginia had jilted Nevill in favor of a man like Wayne, but that Wayne had never really had a chance to paint.

"But he can't paint!" Nevill said se-

verely. "I've seen some of his stuff. Good Heavens! I don't pretend to know much about painting, but I do know rotten work when I see it."

Fedor Chiostro laughed indulgently.

"The man has been painting to live. I suppose you're referring to Dr. Dessau's portrait. I saw it. Humph!"

"That, and several other things," Nevill

replied.

"You've never seen what he can do. There was one picture of his in the Salon during the war; but nobody had time, then, to pay any attention to painters. I believe an American bought it. It was called 'The Artist's Model'—just a lay figure draped in a dingy, paint-stained sheet. It was grim and forceful, yet he'd got sheer beauty into it, too. One felt the poverty of the wretched painter who couldn't afford a living model, yet would somehow contrive a thing of graceful flesh out of that wooden dummy."

"Bah!" exclaimed Nevill. "Wayne's poverty seems to be his one asset. I be-

lieve he's proud of it!"

"He's very ill," Chiostro said gravely.

Nevill bit his lips. He wanted to say, "Well, it would be a blessing if he died;" but that wouldn't have sounded at all nice.

"Meanwhile, Virginia is starving," he

said aloud.

"Oh, no—not exactly starving; but of course something must be done. She saw me put that note on the dresser, but, thank God, she didn't try to thank me, or to make me take it back. They've fixed him up on the couch in the kitchen, and he's able to work a little. He's done a companion portrait of Mme. Dessau to match the good doctor's, and that will about cover the cost of the medical attendance; but he has to have massage and electrical treatments, and nourishing food. All that is expensive. The girl who lives upstairs helps Virginia. A queer creature! Did you see her the day you called?"

Nevill nodded gloomily.

"She looks after them a bit," Chiostro went on. "Nico is working on a portrait of Virginia now. He's going to call it 'Wife and Child of the Artist.'"

"He can't seem to get away from 'the artist,' can he?" sneered Nevill. "Another poverty picture, I take it."

Chiostro shrugged his shoulders.

"The man's a genius," he said stubbornly. "It will be a crime if he gets strong enough to go back to that deadly work at the palace before he's finished this."

"You think he may get strong enough-

may recover, I mean?"

Kind-hearted Chiostro read the unspoken thought in poor Nevill's mind. If Nicholas Wayne were to die, the widow and the orphan would not suffer from neglect. Nevill was such a thoroughly decent young fellow! Not many men would have remained constant under such treatment as he had suffered.

"I oughtn't to hold out false hopes to you," Chiostro said grimly. "Wayne has the constitution of an ox, otherwise he would never have survived that injury to his spine. Having survived thus far, I believe he is thoroughly determined to go on living."

Nevill reddened.

"I didn't mean — oh, hang it all, why pretend? It wouldn't break my heart if he did die."

"I think it would break Virginia's," Chi-

ostro said.

The flush subsided and left Nevill curiously pale. There was a strained look about his eyes that shouldn't have been there with one so young.

"You think she cares that much?"

he said in a husky whisper.

"If you mean, do I think she's in love with him—no, I don't," Chiostro replied; "but Nicholas stands for something to Virginia. If he died—that is to say, if he died now—she would have failed. The story is a little obscure to me, but I know bits of it. You are the only man she was ever in love with. I remember you both coming to my studio to look at her portrait again. Wasn't it a day or so after you first met?"

The fine young face winced under the stabbing reminder. Nevill nodded curtly.

"And you were head over heels in love with each other then, although probably neither of you knew it."

"I knew it," said Nevill.

"Then doubtless she did, too. Hug that to your heart, my friend—the girl loved you. Her mother may have been after a title, but Virginia never thought of such things. She was a different being after she met you. I felt I had painted the wrong woman; but I was right—my God, I was right! With all my heart and soul, Davies, I wish I had been wrong. A little distrust of myself wouldn't do an old man like me any harm. It might even do me

good. I would have liked her to be happy the sweet, pretty child that she was; but when I saw them together in that dreadful studio that I was sharing with Nico, I got the key to the puzzle she'd set me. couldn't be sorry when she eloped with him. I said to myself, 'How many times in a long life does one meet a woman with character enough to work out her own salvation?' You'll find plenty-too manywho pride themselves on leading their own lives, as they call it, and think it demands courage, when it's merely self-indulgence and the sort of passion that the domestic cat understands perfectly; but salvation is another matter. When a woman can do what Virginia O'Dare did, and face the life she has to live, I'm prepared to take off my hat to her!"

S

1

1

Nevill was not quite so much impressed as he should have been.

"You think it's right, then—assuming that she did care for—for me—that she should have married Wayne?"

"If you understand Virginia as well as you ought to—as well as I believe you do —you'll admit that she couldn't possibly do anything else," Chiostro replied quickly. "She's not unhappy, Davies—and surely you don't wish her to be unhappy. She'd have been miserable if she'd married you, after she knew that Nico wanted her."

"She isn't unhappy!" Nevill repeated. He felt bewildered. He was—well, thoroughly unhappy.

"She's just a spirit," Chiostro said cheerfully. "The flesh doesn't count with her very much. I'll wager that it never did. She doesn't even know how changed she is physically. Nico is a realist. Make no mistake about it, he'll paint her hands exactly as they are. The whole world will know what that 'artist's wife' has had to put her hands into. Did you notice—"

Nevill shuddered. A flaming pain shot through him at the remembrance of those poor, work-ravaged hands. Delicate, gently bred Virginia O'Dare! Yet it was not of her hands that Nevill had thought most often since that painful afternoon in St. Cloud. It was of her shadowed eyes and smile, and the robust baby kicking against and tugging at her frailty. Let the hands pass. A week or a month of care would restore them; but the child of Nicholas Wayne had done something to Virginia that completely baffled Nevill.

Once there had existed an almost perfect,

understanding between him and Virginia—so much so that he even comprehended her mad marriage; but Cherry had started a new train of thought in him, which might lead to complete misunderstanding. Cherry, with Virginia's eyes and coloring, was yet most emphatically Wayne's child.

Nevill passed a hand across his eyes with a quick, impatient gesture, to rid himself of the vision. Then he brought the subject back to ways and means. It was hateful to be sitting here in this comfortable club lounge, to be going presently with Chiostro to a carefully chosen dinner—warmed, well fed, and well clothed—and to know that in that wretched little cottage on the edge of Paris Virginia endured life under conditions of dire poverty!

"We must do something," Nevill urged.

" At once!"

"I agree with you, and although I'm not a rich man—"

Nevill interrupted with a gesture.

"You know I would willingly give her anything — everything she could possibly need," he said angrily.

"Of course you would," Chiostro re-

plied. "Only—"

"Only she wouldn't take it-or Wayne wouldn't let her. I understand that, and I admit respecting him for it; but he has no right to let her starve when friends are willing to help. There's a type of person who's proud on the subject of money, and on nothing else. That's Wayne, I take it. He wasn't too proud to marry Virginia, knowing that he couldn't look after her. He wouldn't even let her own father do anything for her. The fellow is stupid—thoroughly stupid! I'll tell you what I'll do, Chiostro - I'll give you a check for twenty thousand francs, and you must see that she gets the money and uses it. She needn't know who it comes from, nor need Wayne."

Chiostro whistled softly and shook his shaggy head.

"That's a tall order, my boy. They'd know it didn't come from me."

"Well, aren't there any societies you can put it on? Tell the wretched man that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Artists' Wives has looked into Virginia's case and reported favorably upon it. I don't care how it's done, so long as it is done. Of course, you needn't give them the whole sum at once, for that would rouse suspicion; but dribble it out, and buy

things yourself—things you can see they need. I wouldn't bother you, if I could do it, but Wayne and I don't like each other very much, and it would only make trouble for Virginia if I played the philanthropist in person. Besides, if there's any occasion for anybody to get touchy, it's only a question of a few weeks when we're bound to hear from the O'Dares, and they can pay me back if they feel it's necessary."

"I'll see what I can do," said Chiostro. After an absurd pretense of having business in Paris, and of running across every week or so, Nevill gave it up, and quite frankly settled himself there in the Hotel Regina. It was a place of cruel memories, yet so identified with his last days of happiness that he went to it like a homesick cat. Always it seemed possible that he might see bright-haired Virginia flitting down the corridor in her soft chinchilla furs, that he might run across that sweet vision and take her unawares.

Across the river Chiostro was established for the winter in a studio overlooking the garden of the Luxembourg. He had let his house in Chelsea. The two men were thrown together a good deal over this matter of Virginia Wayne and her husband.

Every few days Chiostro went out to St. Cloud. When he returned, he was sure to find Nevill patiently waiting in his studio, to hear what had happened. Mouselike Mme. Chiostro would give Nevill tea, and sometimes he would wait as long as three hours for Chiostro's return. It was cruel, that waiting! Afterward, whenever Nevill Davies thought of a soul in purgatory, it was always a gray December day glooming through an immense north window, with the bare branches of trees outside creaking miserably in the cold.

It was cold in the studio, too, for the place was heated only by a doll's-size grate. Mme. Chiostro muffled herself in woolen scarfs, and whenever she spoke at all, she complained of the temperature; but it wasn't the cold that hurt Nevill. If anything, he derived a certain amount of cheer from physical discomfort. At least he could share something with Virginia!

He spent the times of waiting in complete idleness, smoking cigarette after cigarette, hating the taste of them, yet unable to subdue the nervous craving for some sort of relief. The stoutness of which Molly Shaw had spoken had worn away. Nevill was as thin as a rail, and there were fine lines in his face that gave him a wasted and almost a dissipated look.

Virginia, the unattainable, had become for him a fixed idea. He understood now how men are driven by an idea to commit murder. He thought of Virginia as a wounded animal caught in the springs of a steel trap. If it cost him his life, she must be released!

He turned the matter over in his mind with grim deliberation while he waited

there in Chiostro's studio.

Suppose that he killed Wayne! His own life would be the forfeit, and then he could leave a comfortable fortune to Virginia. No, it was too absurd—too ridiculous! One couldn't kill a man, and get hanged or guillotined, and leave a fortune for the widow to enjoy, all in the space of a few weeks.

Besides, it would a messy, scandalous business. Virginia would simply hate the idea; and as for poor Molly, she would never be able to hold up her head again. Oh, no—the murder was off. One must

think of something else.

Then Nevill would try to think of something else, other than all the impossible things of which he had thought before, casting away his half-smoked cigarettes, drumming idly on the frosty window pane, wandering about in a state of absolute dejection.

Only five o'clock? Surely it must be later! Chiostro couldn't have started for home yet, and it would take him quite an

hour to return.

Nevill could tell the time by Mme. Chiostro. At five she always came in, poked up the slumbering handful of fire, lit half a dozen candles, and then brought a tea tray. There would be cakes and hot buttered toast on the tray, and since Nevill knew she had prepared the repast herself—although he always begged her not to bother—he would try to choke down some of it.

In this wise he was waiting on the afternoon before Christmas. Mme. Chiostro had decorated the studio with holly, and there was fruit cake of her own baking on the tray. She even went so far as to wish Nevill a merry Christmas before she drifted out again. He was almost moved to ask her to remain and have a cup of tea with him; but he refrained, remembering the difficulties of making conversation with her. A tête-à-tête with Mme. Chiostro

would have been a macabre touch to which he was not equal this afternoon.

The day before Christmas! What can be sadder, drearier, than a festal season when the world has gone wrong?

Outside, the wind howled steadily and battered the protesting trees. A patter of sleet drove against the big north window, and little whispers disturbed the studio-the rustle of draperies, the soft flapping of a blind. Suddenly the door opened and Chiostro appeared, buttoned snugly in his fur-lined coat, his cheeks red, the tip of his nose blue.

"Ah!" he exclaimed briskly. you are, here you are! Had tea? That's good! Mamma!"

Mme. Chiostro dutifully appeared.

"Home so soon, papa? Yes, I will bring fresh tea at once-in only a minute."

"You see!" said Chiostro, as she scuttled out with the pot and the hot water jug. "Such a model wife! I do not even need to tell her what I want. That's the sort of wife a man ought to have, my boy -there when wanted, but never in the way. With nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand women it's the other way about. Women bore me, Davies! I've seen too many of them in my time. Tiresome crea-Never met one who wasn't tiresome, except Mme. Chiostro. Not-asingle-one!"

"Has Virginia been tiresome?" Nevill asked, trying to speak casually, but betraying himself by a quiver of the voice.

Chiostro nodded thoughtfully.

"You might say so-on reflection, you might."

It was what Nevill had been expecting. "I suppose she wants to know where the money's coming from?" he asked.

"She knows, unfortunately," Chiostro confessed.

"Oh, I say!"

"I didn't tell her. When she got me into a corner, I lied. I said I'd written to her parents, and they'd told me to draw on them for anything that was needed."

"Well?" Nevill asked impatiently.

" Well!"

Chiostro, with irritating leisureliness, took off his overcoat and unwound his muffler. He was just about to speak again when madame created another diversion by entering with the replenished pot and jug. An interval passed while he poured himself a cup of tea.

Nevill lit a cigarette and tugged at his mustache, as if determined to uproot it. Confound the man!

Chiostro drew forward a chair and planted himself close enough to the fire to put his feet into it. There he sat, massive and discontented, stirring the sugar in his tea, his gaze moodily fixed on the one blazing coal in the tiny, smoldering heap.

"It's too bad-too bad!" he said finally. "Couldn't you tell me?" Nevill asked

with despairing patience.
"I am telling you. You see, she had written to her mother-it was because of Nico and the baby, she said—and the letter came back marked 'address unknown' so there I was, rather caught. She wanted to know where I'd written, and of course I hadn't the faintest idea. You should have told me, my boy. I thought they lived in New York. Anyway, I said New York. Then Virginia said:

"'It's no good your pretending.

money comes from Nevill!'

"Well, perhaps I blushed. Oh, yes, I can blush, if I'm caught in a lie. It was all up then. She said it was awfully kind of you, but it wouldn't be fair to Nicholas if she took your money. I made her take the chicken and the cake and the wine. Anyway, that was my wife's present. Virginia is going to sit to me for one of that series I'm working on. I have to employ a model anyway, and she might as well have the job. She was delighted. She's coming three days a week, and that Collins girl will look after Nico and the baby while she's here. It's better than nothing for her, isn't it?"

Bland, shaggy-haired Chiostro suddenly became a most distasteful person to Nevill

Davies.

"Her husband doesn't object to her being a model, then?" he demanded furiously.

"Why should he? No, he doesn't object. Do you?"

"Yes-most emphatically yes!"

"Oh, well!" Chiostro began to laugh. "No harm will come to her, you may be sure. She's too skinny for the figure, if that's what's bothering you. I'm not likely to make love to her. That's what I keep my wife here for-to see that I don't get

into any trouble of that sort. At my age, it's too costly. Besides, Virginia has sat to me before. Aren't you forgetting?"

"It was different," said Nevill.

"You mean that she paid me-or rather

her parents did-and was chaperoned.

Well, she'll be chaperoned now."

It sounded all right, but there was something in Chiostro's manner that offended Nevill. It angered him to think that Nicholas Wayne would prefer Virginia to sit for long hours in this cold room, posing to Fedor Chiostro, instead of being comfortable at home on his money. He was allowed to do nothing for her!

"Did Wayne hear this conversation you

had with Virginia?" he asked.

"No. She followed me out to the gate, and we talked there; but she went back to ask him if he would object to the sittings."

" And you say he agreed."

"Oh, yes, he agreed. She—she sent her love to you."

"Thanks!" said Nevill.

He had noticed a hesitation in the delivery of the message of affection. Chiostro had been a long time remembering it, and even then had brought it out reluctantly.

His chicken, his cake, his wine, had been accepted, it seemed! What did it matter that he called the parcel a present from his wife? There was slyness here—double dealing. Yet Nevill had an ax to grind, so must pretend friendliness. He even managed to coax his ill humor to a semblance of nonchalance.

"I'd better be going now. By the way, I don't suppose you'd mind if I had a little talk with Virginia here? I should like to

see her."

Chiostro turned his grizzled head and stared at him. On Nevill's side the mutual gaze developed into a fixed glare.

"It might upset her," Chiostro said finally. "She has so much just now to bother

her, poor child!"

"I haven't the slightest intention of of bothering her," Nevill returned heatedly. "You know that as well as I do!"

Chiostro was very patient with him.

"Of course you haven't, my boy—of course you haven't! Who said so? Yet I feel that it might. I want her to get into the mood of my picture. It's a study of 'Tranquillity' that I want. You must see how important it is, my boy—not only to me, but to Virginia."

Nevill didn't care for so much of this

" my boy."

"I think I understand," he said. "Good afternoon! I shan't need to bother you any more, it seems."

Chiostro struggled up to see him off.

"Now that's all nonsense. We shall meet at the International, of course. must settle with you about the money. I hope, my boy, that you aren't annoyed with me; but of course you aren't. Both of us want to do the best we can for Virginia, don't we? If you're temporarily out of the running, so much the better-I mean to say, so much the greater is my responsibility. Nico is getting on splendidly with his picture. It's marvelous - and he's rather marvelous, too; but I couldn't expect you to understand about that. We artists live in a different world from yours, my boy! Once we both realize that, we stand some faint chance of comprehending each other."

Nevill was sick of him. Fatuous, sly,

double-faced old fool!

The young man flung out of the house in a state of complete disgust. What was Fedor Chiostro driving at? That tumult of words—words!—covered something. At least, it tried to. Nevill thought he understood all too well. Different worlds, indeed! And to which world, please, did Virginia O'Dare belong? To Chiostro's? Heaven forbid! In his present mood, Nevill almost lost sight of Nicholas Wayne.

There had been a moment when he held Virginia's hands, when her shoulders had heaved and her eyes filled with tears, when little choking sobs had told him, more plainly than speech, just how she felt. There had been that moment, and Nevill

was not likely to forget it.

Of course, Virginia would play the game. She had proved it by her mad marriage. Nevill admitted, even to himself, that she had played the game in marrying Nicholas Wayne. He saw her point of view, and realized that to play straight she had been obliged to run a little crooked. Her parents wouldn't have seen eye to eye with her. That was why she had eloped.

Nevill felt that he understood Virginia as perhaps no one else understood her. Their mutual confidence in each other had transcended the ordinary, and he was not prepared to have that confidence disrupted

by a Fedor Chiostro.

XXI

WHEN Nevill left Chiostro's studio that afternoon, he was suddenly at a complete loss as to what to do with himself. It was past six o'clock, already dark, and the weather distressingly unpleasant. The icy

sleet had changed to rain, and the wind

made walking uncomfortable.

Nevertheless, Nevill started out to walk. He could go to his club, if he liked-that luxurious rendezvous of well-to-do Bohemians, where he would be certain of finding some one to keep him company at dinner and of picking up a rubber of bridge afterward; but at the club he might easily run into Chiostro again. The hotel did not attract him. There was nothing to be found there but an emphasized loneliness.

He began to wish that he had run over to England, where Molly Shaw would have had a warm welcome for him. How selfish he had been with regard to poor Molly! This would be a lonely Christmas for her, too. Of course, she would have the children-jolly little beggars!-but they had lost good old Tom, and that was hard on

all of them.

"Well," he thought, "I can catch the night train and be there for Christmas after

all."

But the idea did not thrill him. He would be poor company for his young cousins, and Molly would be sure to irritate him. Still, perhaps he had better go. One must think of others occasionally.

What earthly good was he accomplishing by hanging around Paris? Virginia was as far removed from him as if she dwelt in Kamchatka. He could not even watch over her by proxy now. Chiostro had

swept him out of it.

Molly's last letter had inquired plaintively if Nevill wouldn't please arrange a quiet family house party at Davies Hall. She had heard from the housekeeper and the head gardener, and so many things required his personal attention. The housekeeper had made plum puddings and mince pies, and it would be a pity to waste them on the parish poor, who oughtn't to eat such rich things. Molly's father and mother would love to come-" So we should be properly chaperoned, Nevill darling!"and the children were simply wild to spend their holidays in the country.

He had answered Molly's letter, putting Davies Hall, the puddings, the pies, and the parish poor at her complete disposal, but saying that he would be unable to join the party. It was selfish of him, and he knew it. Why should he be so disagreeable? All on account of a girl who had jilted him. He knew how Molly looked at it, and her point of view was reasonable.

Yes, he must catch the night train and run over for a surprise visit. He could easily reach Davies Hall in time for the midday feast. What on earth could he do

for Virginia by staying here?

There wouldn't be much time in which to choose presents, but he simply couldn't arrive empty-handed; so he took a cab, and in the arcade shops of the Rue de Rivoli he made hurried purchases-absurdly decorated boxes of bonbons, grotesque toys, a jeweled bangle for Molly-whatever he saw, or whatever was pressed upon him, until his money gave out. With his arms full of parcels—looking quite Christmasy, in fact-he entered the portals of his hotel; and there the concierge immediately informed him that Mrs. Shaw had arrived that afternoon, and would like to see him as soon as he came in.

Molly here in Paris, on Christmas Eve! That was a strange proceeding. Nevill couldn't imagine her deserting the children at such a time, except for a matter of great Then it flashed across him importance. that perhaps she had come over for the express purpose of coaxing him to go back with her. She was rather a creature of impulse, and she thought a lot of him-

more than he deserved.

"Mrs. Shaw has taken a sitting room. No. 44, on the fourth floor, sir," said the concierge. "Shall I send the parcels up to your room, sir?"

"Thanks," said Nevill.

He handed over his parcels, and a page appeared to escort him to Molly's sitting room.

He felt slightly vexed with Molly, yet a little pleased, too. It would be comforting to talk to her. But why, if it was only a flying visit, had she engaged a sitting room? Perhaps she had some argument to present which could not be thrashed out in public. Money difficulties? No, it couldn't be that. A final, impassioned appeal to him to give up this madness? Quite likely.

Nevill's heart steeled itself against such an encounter. Who was Molly Shaw, to dictate to him? People were so fond of interfering in the troubles of others-particularly Molly. He would be gentle with her, but very firm, so that there shouldn't remain any doubt on the question of who

was his master.

The page left him at the door. When he knocked, her voice bade him enter.

For a second or two he stood looking at

her, shot through with a pang of anger at the cozy, altogether comfortable picture she presented. In these days he had to contrast every other woman's circumstances with Virginia's. There sat Molly, bunched on a sofa close to the fire, banked with satin pillows, and wrapped in a wonderful garment of white fur and velvet, with a cigarette holder held daintily between thumb and forefinger.

"Hello!" he said. "What does this

mean?"

"Hello, Nevill!" Molly replied. "Just thought I'd run over and have a look at

you. Hope you don't mind?"

"On the contrary, I'm delighted. Only"—he laughed—"I had been thinking of paying a surprise visit myself. I was going across to England to-night."

Molly unfolded herself slowly and tossed her cigarette into the fire. It struck him suddenly that she looked rather pale, and

that her greeting had lacked the effusive explanations that he expected.

"Have a rough crossing?" he asked.

" Beastly!" said Molly.
" Poor old thing!"

He came to sit beside her on the couch, and patted the hand she held out to him. If Molly had been seasick, it would be sheer cruelty to expect her to turn straight around and go back to England to-night.

"Nevill, I couldn't write," she said.
"There are some things that look too hideous on paper. I simply had to come."
Her voice was shaken, and a little breathless. "I felt that I must be the one to tell you, and that together we'd decide what to do about it."

Vaguely he began to comprehend that this was not an ordinary visit of affection—

that something had happened.
"What is it, Molly? What has hap-

pened?" he asked anxiously.

"You know that letter I wrote to Edith?"

" Yes."

"Well-it came back."

This was not specially exciting news. That very afternoon Nevill had heard from Chiostro that Virginia had written to her mother and had had her letter returned to her.

"I suppose the post office people hadn't their address," he said.

Had Molly journeyed to Paris on Christmas Eve merely to tell him that her letter to Edith O'Dare had been returned? Or was she making the letter an excuse for something else?

"No," she said, in that shaken, breathless voice. "No—they know, now. Oh, Nevill, it's terrible! Somebody will have to tell Virginia. Her mother and father are dead!"

"Dead!" Nevill echoed. He felt how slow he was at grasping things. That cheery and comparatively young couple dead? "What do you mean? Are you sure they are dead? Who told you?" he asked.

Molly shivered, and drew her warm gown together at the neck. She was holding it thus, the fur against her face, her little white hands sparkling with rings arousing in Nevill a painful memory of

Virginia's hands.

"There was a newspaper paragraph about it," Molly said. "I'll show it to you presently. I've got it in my bag. There wasn't very much-just saying that Malcolm and Edith were killed in a motor accident in Japan. It was a narrow road, and in swerving to avoid another car, the one they were in went over a bank. The chauffeur lost control or something. happened about a month ago. I don't know why it wasn't reported sooner. went straight to the American Embassy, and saw that Mr. Duncan who was such a friend of theirs. He said the news was quite true-he'd had it verified. He was awfully upset. And there was a woman there—a Mrs. Chalmers, an American who had come to find out something about This Mrs. Chalmers seemed to know a lot about the O'Dares. She said Malcolm had lost a great deal of money lately, and was in poor health, and that was why they took that trip. Edith thought he needed a complete change. Well, he's got Poor Malcolm—and Edith! too dreadful? They were so fond of each other-like lovers, although they'd been married so long."

"They had each other-to the end,"

Nevill muttered.

"This Mrs. Chalmers asked about Virginia, and-"

Nevill was instantly in arms.

"What did you tell her?"
"Nothing that you could

"Nothing that you could possibly object to, my dear. I merely said she was living in St. Cloud, and Mr. Duncan took down her married name and address. The lawyers will want to communicate with her,

of course, although this Mrs. Chalmers says she is sure poor Malcolm's estate won't work out at anything like what one would have expected. I told Mr. Duncan not to write to Virginia for a few days. She was such a curious girl, but she really was fond of her father and mother; and though she hasn't seen them lately, it will be a blowespecially as you say she's so hard up and worried and everything. For Edith's sake, it seemed to me that I ought to try to do something."

There was genuine feeling in Molly's

voice.

"You're a brick!" Nevill said, squeezing her hand so hard that the rings bit into her fingers and made her wince sharply.

"Oh, Nevill!"

"I'm sorry. Did I hurt you? Let me see."

She gave him her hand. He examined it tenderly, and kissed the reddened dents.

"You're so strong, Nevill! I believe you're made of iron," she sighed.

If there was a double meaning in that remark. Nevill didn't see it.

"I never thought," he said. "I'm no end grateful to you, Molly. It was a fine thing for you to come over here-Christmas and all-leaving the kids-"

"Oh, they're quite happy. Mother and dad are looking after them. They're going to have a splendid time. We grown-ups fancy we're so important to our children, but they don't mind anything so long as they have a good time."

"Well, just the same, it was kind of you to come. I know you'd far rather be with

them."

Molly made no reply. Her head drooped on her doubled fist, and she sat silent, star-

ing into the fire.

Nevill got up. Her nearness, the warmth of her, the faint perfume of violets that clung to her soft little person, made him feel vaguely uncomfortable. He gave her a quick sidewise glance as she sat there, seeming not to heed him. Then he lighted one of the inevitable cigarettes. It seemed necessary to do something.

Thirty-two, or How old was Molly? possibly a little more—older than he was in actual years; yet lately he had begun to feel so ancient that just now she looked to him miraculously young. Suppose Virginia O'Dare had never crossed his path? Eleven years ago, when Molly got married, and Nevill was in his second term at Oxford,

he had imagined himself broken-hearted, and had almost refused to attend her wedding. Curious how a man changes—and women, too!

In those days Molly had laughed at him for his infatuation. He wondered whether she would laugh now, if he tried to make love to her. He was not of an experimental nature where women were concerned, and so he did not try. It would be too dangerous to them both, and grossly unfair to Molly should she by any chance take him seriously; but he thought it would be rather comforting to lay his head on her shoulder and be petted a little. Those small, white, sparkling hands!

And then he shivered with a cold, despairing ecstasy. In spirit he dropped to his knees to press kisses upon another pair of hands, to crave Virginia's forgiveness

for those treacherous thoughts.

"What do you propose?" he asked aloud.

Molly started. She, too, had been woolgathering.

"About what? Oh, you mean about telling Virginia. I'm sure I don't know. Have you any suggestions? Shall I go out to St. Cloud and see her?"

"I wonder if she would mind?" Nevill

mused.

" Mind? Mind hearing that her father and mother were dead?"

"No, I mean your going. They're so wretchedly poor. Still—"

"I should dress very plainly," said Mol-"You see, I'm in mourning myself. Somebody must tell her. Shall I write to her husband? Perhaps that would be best."

Nevill winced miserably. Was Nicholas Wayne the best one to tell Virginia? It seemed to Nevill that her husband lacked the first essence of sympathy, that he was a cold, self-centered creature who would laugh when others wept, and weep-if he ever did-only for himself.

"A letter is a harsh sort of thing in a case of this sort. I think you'd better go, Molly. It won't be very pleasant for you, old girl; still, if you don't mind-"

"I'll go if you want me to," Molly promised. "Poor Virginia!"

"You'll be-gentle with her?"

"What do you imagine I should be?"

"Forgive me, my dear! I know you'll do your best. When do you think-"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow is Christmas," Nevill objected. "It seems rather dreadful to bring

such news on Christmas Day."

"Well, my dear Nevill, I don't know what to say. I positively promised the children that I'd come back the day after to-morrow. You know what it is when you promise children. I'd rather do anything than break my word to them."

"Oh, very well! To-morrow, then,"

Nevill agreed wearily.

Did it matter so much, Christmas or the day after, as far as Virginia was concerned? He had the feeling of a cowardly assassin planning to deliver a death blow to one al-

ready sadly stricken.

It was ungracious, however, to indulge his own mood when Molly had taken so much trouble and really wanted to help him. She was a little pathetic about its being Christmas Eve, with the two of them cut adrift from home ties like this, and all on account of — she didn't actually say

what it was on account of.

She brightened up a good deal when he fetched the presents he had brought, dived into the sweets with childish eagerness, and proudly wore her bangle. She was positive that Christopher and little Tom and Claribel would love their Parisian playthings. Wasn't the monkey too charming? And that simply adorable doll with the thatch of yellow wool for hair—well, Molly thought she would keep that herself. It was too ridiculously amusing to waste on Claribel.

"We're not going to sit around here and mope all evening, are we?" she asked plaintively. "I know I'm in mourning, but poor Tom would hate me not to have a good time if there was any chance of my getting it. This is Paris, and nobody knows us. Besides, people who are in mourning don't shut themselves up forever

nowadays."

So they went to the Lapérouse and dined richly, and afterward to a lively musical show, where the ladies of the chorus were very pretty and gay, and the comedian correspondingly broad. Nevill tried to believe that he was enjoying himself, but with Molly it was no effort. The fatigue of her journey had completely evaporated, and she was in high spirits.

Later, they had supper at Ciro's, where

they even danced.

"Because, Nevill darling," said Molly, "nobody knows us!"

He had the sense of being alone in a mad, rollicking world with Molly for a companion. He was faintly surprised that she should have decked herself out with so much jewelry. Was that the new fashion for a recently made widow? She wore her rings, and a pearl necklace with a clasp of sapphires and diamonds, and the bangle he had given her. She looked very lovely in her frock of misty black tulle, and more than one admiring glance fastened upon her—of which she was superbly aware.

There was certainly one useful thing about Molly. She helped to destroy thought. But for her, Heaven knows what Nevill might have been doing that night. Rising with much difficulty to meet her mood, he realized to what profound depths

of melancholy he had fallen.

But, alas, when it was all done with, and he had said good night to her over a whisky and soda in her cozy sitting room, he found himself back exactly where he was before, only a little worse off, if anything. He had made a sincere and determined effort to set Virginia aside in his mind—and even in his heart, if possible—and he simply couldn't do it.

He hadn't hoped or wished to cease loving her. It was only that he thought it might be possible to find room for other interests. Why not tell the exact truth? What he was thinking of was to find room in his heart for Molly Shaw, should Molly be willing to take the second best place. But there was no room for Molly—not an

inch.

They went to St. Cloud together the next afternoon. After taking Molly to Virginia's gate, Nevill returned to wait for her at the café where he had been so rudely accosted

by Nicholas Wayne.

It cost an effort to turn back from that gate, to know that Virginia was so near, yet must remain invisible to him. Still. there was vague comfort in the thought of being near her, just as there had been in getting news of her at first hand from Fedor Chiostro. In a little while Molly would return and bring him news. A woman's eye—the eye of a woman of the world. like Molly-would be more discerning than that of a Chiostro. Chiostro half sympathized with that conceited, improvident Chiostro had been concerned chiefly that the miserable "genius" should have a chance to paint his picture-when the fellow couldn't paint at all!

"It seems to me," Nevill meditated irritably, "that I'm always hanging around

a café, waiting for a woman!"

This particular café seemed a cheerful enough spot, however. It had been brightly festooned with garlands of red and green tissue paper, and a penny-in-the-slot gambling machine was doing a brisk business, rivaling the automatic piano. A few young couples were dancing, and people sat about at the little tables, sipping coffee or sirups—mostly country folk, family parties making holiday.

Nevill occupied himself with a tumblerful of coffee strongly flavored with chicory, and wondered what it was all about, why he was here, why anybody should have thought it necessary that he should be born into the world. Life had become incredibly tedious. He thought of all the years he had before him if he lived to be as old as one of his grandfathers, who had attained the ripe age of ninety-nine before retiring to the grave. Oh, no—the idea was unbearable!

But did he want to die? Somehow, no. One never knew what might turn up. Even in the midst of unhappiness, there was always the chance that something different

lurked around the corner.

The door of the café opened and a redhaired girl came in, casting a comprehensive glance—which included Nevill—upon the assembled merrymakers. He recognized her instantly for the glowering young woman who hadn't thought any too well of Virginia's housekeeping, yet who was not an expert maker of tea.

Had she come to look for him? Had he been sent for? He half rose, anxiety etched

painfully in every line of his face.

The girl nodded with supercilious indifference. She had come, not for Nevill, but for a bottle of wine, and this she proceeded to obtain at the counter. Nevill sank back again, angry with himself for having noticed her. He felt that she was laughing at him—in her sleeve, so to speak, for her mouth and eyes were anything but merry.

He gazed out of the window with an air of indifference that matched her own when she turned away from the counter with her purchase. Nevertheless, he trembled violently. Here was some one else, this Marietta Collins, who was close to Virginia, who lived in the same house with her, who saw her every day, yet who doubtless did not appreciate such a great privilege.

The door opened and closed again, and the red-haired girl had gone. He saw her tap-tapping with the practiced skill of a wire walker on her high heels up the steep hill, confident, scornful, triumphant.

XXII

INDEED, Molly Shaw's task was not an easy one. For all the lightness of her nature, she had been genuinely fond of Edith O'Dare, and now it seemed to her that she

had also been fond of Virginia.

The little tumble-down peasant's cottage might look picturesque in the summer time, but in December, with the neglected garden filled with withered flower stalks and a naked vine rattling against the stained, damp-looking wall, it appeared merely cold and uncomfortable. Molly felt distinctly apprehensive when Nevill left her at the gate, and she was alone with her burden of bad news.

She walked slowly up the untidy brick path, and, after no more than a second's hesitation, summoned the courage to knock. A man's voice bade her come in, and, as she hesitated again, repeated the invitation more sharply; so she opened the door.

Nicholas Wayne was lying propped up on the couch, facing her. There was a smell of paint in the room, and also of food cooking. The easel had been pushed into a corner, with the canvas turned to the wall, and the table was laid for a meal.

Nicholas was partially dressed. An old black velvet coat clothed the upper part of him, and a rug lay over his knees. He had been freshly shaved, his dark hair glistened, and a gayly flowered handkerchief serving as a necktie gave him a somewhat festive appearance.

Molly was surprised to discover that he was undeniably handsome, and even distinguished-looking. She had expected to see a rather common, slovenly person with all the attributes of a bully and none of those usually associated with a gentleman.

"I—I've called to see Mrs. Wayne," she said, a little helplessly. "My name is Mrs. Shaw. You're Mr. Wayne, aren't you?"

Nicholas produced a shy and most attractive smile.

"Please come in—and forgive me for not getting up. For the moment, I'm bedridden. Mrs. Shaw, did you say? I think I've heard Jinny mention you. You're a great friend of her mother's, aren't you?" Molly winced.

"Yes, I-oh, Mr. Wayne, such a dreadful thing has happened! I don't quite

know how to begin.

She threw a distressed glance around the room, as if inviting it to share her discomfiture. Nicholas raised himself on his pillows, the smile melting into an expression of deep gravity.

"Please sit down," he said courteously. Molly pulled forward one of the hard little chairs, and fumbled for her handkerchief. She felt Nicholas's gaze inspecting her smart mourning, and hastened to put

"It's not about myself. It's Virginiaher father and mother. You see, Mr. Chiostro is an acquaintance of mine, and he told me how ill you were." It was better, Molly thought, to leave Nevill's name entirely out of this. "So I wrote to Mrs. O'Dare, and the other day I had newssuch dreadful news! You see, I got no answer to my letter. In fact, it came back."

Nicholas's dark brows contracted in an effort to comprehend what she was saying.

"I believe my wife also wrote to her mother, and the letter came back," he said. "Yes - you see, they're dead. They were both killed in a motor accident."

Nicholas made a hurried gesture, as if to restrain her, and looked beyond her with a startled expression. Turning quickly. she saw Virginia standing in the doorway leading to the bedroom-Virginia, in a stuff dress of faded lavender, gaunt and beautiful, her hair a crown of tarnished sunshine, a rosy little child in her arms.

"Oh, Jinny dear-you heard!" Molly

cried, bursting into tears.

"Come here, Jinny," Nicholas said.

Virginia crossed the room slowly, holding the baby with the abstracted manner

of a sleepwalker.

"Sit down beside me, dear." Nicholas made room for her on the couch, and put one arm around her waist. " Perhaps there's been a mistake. Did you understand what Mrs. Shaw was saying?"

"Yes, I think so. My father and mother are dead," Virginia replied, in a voice that was even-toned, almost expressionless.

Molly dabbed her eyes and blew her

" Poor Jinny, I meant to break it to you gently!" she exclaimed.

" My mother and father are dead. Oh,

dear-and now they'll never see my baby! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! My head feels so funny, Nico-going around and around."
"Marietta!" Nicholas cried sharply.

It wasn't necessary to call twice. Instantly a quick clatter sounded on the stairs, and down came Marietta Collins.

"I was just going out," she cried.

"What is it?"

Her voice was aggressive to the point of impertinence, and she stared boldly at Molly Shaw.

"My wife has had bad news," Nicholas replied. "I'm afraid it has upset her.

Will you take Cherry?"

"Oh, give the little darling to me!" Molly cried, anxious to do something.

She took Virginia's baby, comforted a little by contact with the soft, small body. Edith's grandchild! Who could have imagined Edith O'Dare a grandmother?

Nicholas put his arms around his wife and drew her head down upon his shoulder. while Marietta Collins spitefully rubbed

her cold wrists.

"That will do, Marietta. Bring her a

glass of water," Nicholas said.
"Oh, thank you, I don't want any water. I'm all right," Virginia gasped.
"Thank you, Marietta. Just for the moment, Nico, I felt queer. I wanted so much-I can't tell you how I've longed for mother to see Cherry! Please tell me about it, Mrs. Shaw. Did you come all the way from London just purposely?"

"Yes, we-I thought a letter would be too dreadful," Molly said, her face against the gurgling baby's. "And I might as well have written. I thought and thought how best to tell you, Jinny dear, and now I've blurted it out in the most brutal fashion! It was an accident, and I believe they were killed instantly, poor darlings-quite pain-

lessly, too."

She went on to give what information she had, even to there being little or no money left by the unfortunate O'Dares. She wondered what effect this particular item of bad news would have on Nicholas Wayne, but he gave no sign of being affected by it one way or the other. main care was trying to soften the blow to Virginia, and Molly's impression of them was of a struggling young couple who were very fond of each other. Virginia had turned to Nicholas quite as naturally as any wife would turn to her husband.

During the recital of details, Marietta

Collins left the room, and presently they

heard the gate click behind her.

Molly mentioned Mr. Duncan, of the embassy, and the Mrs. Chalmers whom she had met there; but still she did not mention Nevill, nor did Virginia, and gradually she realized that Nicholas Wayne did not in any way associate her with Nevill. It was just as well. She gained a less prejudiced impression of him than she would have got had Nevill's relationship to her embarrassed the conversation.

She was slightly indignant against Nevill, as she took her way down the hill again. Of course, the Waynes were hard up financially. Anybody could see that; but Molly had not been able to discover anything that pointed to Virginia's being dissatisfied with

her poor circumstances.

It seemed to Molly that Virginia was not even conscious of their poverty. She was exactly the same—a vague sort of enigma, as she had been before Nevill carried her out of herself for a brief season. The real Virginia was this vague enigma. There had been a moment when the sharp little cries of "Oh, dear!" had overwhelmed her, and she seemed on the verge of being human; but it had passed quickly. It was Molly who had wept, not Virginia.

"It isn't that she's exactly cold-hearted," mused Molly, as she hurried down the steep hill to the café where Nevill was waiting. "No, I wouldn't call Virginia cold-hearted. I wonder what it is? She simply shuts herself up. 'Reserved' is such a vulgar and easy way of explaining her. No, I wouldn't call Virginia reserved. Perhaps poor Edith was right. Virginia may not be quite, quite normal. She may not feel things the way most of us do."

At that point in her cogitations, Molly was diverted by the sight of Marietta Collins returning from the wine shop with a claret bottle in the crook of her arm. They

pretended not to see each other.

"What a strange-looking girl!" thought Molly. "She must be the one Nevill mentioned. He didn't care much for her, and neither do I. I didn't at all like the way she spoke—so familiar and abrupt. I wonder if I've been a long time! Poor Nevill! Oh, poor, poor Nevill!"

Back in the tumble-down cottage, Nicholas Wayne was also trying to come to some understanding of his wife. He, too, had been stirred by Virginia's threatened collapse. Only once before had he ever witnessed anything approaching a breakdown on her part, and there were several reasons why that former occasion did not stand out vividly in his memory. He recollected dimly that she had fallen on her knees beside his bed and prayed in an absurd fashion, whether to him or to her Creator he was not quite sure.

The memory, though obscured by pain and cognac, had left behind it a pleasurable sense of excitement. In fact, it had touched Nicholas, even though he had been brusque with her at the time. It seemed somehow to show that she cared for him.

But those brief moments of revelation

passed.

After Molly left, Virginia concerned herself with the Christmas dinner, which was now considerably belated. Chiostro's chicken, unfortunately, was done to a crisp, although not actually to a cinder. Virginia apologized as she took it from the oven. She mashed potatoes and made gravy according to the American fashion, thickened as Nicholas liked it; but she got it too thick, and a little lumpy.

He played mechanically with the baby while Virginia attended to these things, all the time watching her, flinging in a friendly word whenever she expressed her dissatis-

faction with culinary results.

"It's all right, Jinny. I don't care a hang what Marietta says, you're a dandy cook, really. Honey, you know I don't mind what I eat. You're a fine little sport, Jinny—the way you've taken this—this business. All of it, I mean. I guess I understand what you've been through—what you're going through. Somebody ought to lick the tar out of me!"

" Oh, no!"

Virginia turned upon him, whitely passionate, the gravy spoon in her hand dripping brown splotches upon the floor, which on this occasion had been scrubbed by Marietta.

"No, Nico—you mustn't say that. Please don't! It hurts me. If only you'll get well again! It would be the most perfect miracle if you'd get completely well. I don't want anything better than that. I think dinner's ready."

She looked about in a stricken fashion, conscious that of course there would be

something she had forgotten.

"Oh, the bread! Oh, I didn't have time to clean the knives. Where are they? Oh, here they are, in the scullery. Marietta cleaned them. She is so kind, Nico! I know you don't like her, and I admit she's a little queer, but certainly she has been kind to us during your illness. What would I have done without Marietta? Look, she's left a little pot of currant jelly. Did you hear her come in? I ought to thank her."

"We'll have our dinner first. You can thank her afterward," growled Nicholas.

"Time enough for that!'

XXIII

AFTER the meal was disposed of, Virginia cleared the table and went into the scullery to wash the dishes.

Nicholas had noticed that she ate very little, but it was not to be expected that she would have much appetite, considering Molly Shaw's news. He had tried to coax her, and she had done her best to respond, but the rather hearty fare, coming after weeks of semistarvation, sickened her. To augment Chiostro's donation, Marietta had given them a small Christmas pudding, and Mme. Dessau, the doctor's wife, had sent a thick wedge of rich-looking cake and a bottle of brandied peaches.

If it hadn't been for the news about Malcolm and Edith O'Dare, Nicholas would have enjoyed the feast tremendously. Yesterday Chiostro had been superbly flattering about his picture, and the praise had gone to his head with more potency than wine. It was a grim picture, a terrible picture, but it was Jinny and Cherry and their poverty in all its stark reality. Chiostro prophesied that it would be the picture of the year, if only Nico could manage to finish it in time for the spring

Salon.

If only he could finish it! And he could, even working slowly, if he didn't get well too soon and have to go back to his soul-killing task at the palace. But he was getting better. He could hobble about a little now, if he wanted to.

The picture obsessed him. At all hours of daylight, Virginia had to pose for him, with or without the baby in her lap. She rose before dawn, in order to attend to the housework and to be ready to sit when Nicholas wanted her. She did their wash-

ing and ironing after dark.

Nicholas had agreed to her posing three days a week for Chiostro, merely because she showed him an empty purse, and he realized that while they might live on next to nothing, it was impossible to live on nothing at all. He agreed with her, too, that they could not go on accepting Chiostro's charity—for he believed that the money had come from Chiostro. Fortunately for his peace of mind, the thought of Nevill Davies had faded into the background.

While he admitted the necessity for her earning what she could to help out in this crisis, Nicholas chafed at the idea of Virginia's going into Paris three days a week. Of course, Marietta would look after the baby, and he could manage to look after himself, but he hated the thought of Virginia's being away. It was not entirely selfish, although the loss to himself was of

paramount importance.

During his illness he had had leisure in which to observe his wife closely, and he had suddenly come to see her with a newer, clearer vision. His own ineptitude revolted him. Her soft, inquiring silences, that strange little doubtful smile of hers, the shadowed eyes that always seemed to be questioning him—although he did not know what they asked—her patience and gratitude to Marietta, all made a new and deep impression on Nicholas.

Before, he had loved her for her beauty, had enjoyed her charm, had been repelled at times by her remoteness. He had tried to break down the intangible barrier with wild and passionate love-making; then, sometimes, he had sulked and left her alone. He had thought more about possession than the gentler aspects of love, and he knew that he had never really possessed

Virginia.

There had been times, during those first two years, when he had come very near to telling her to go back to her parents and leave him in peace. That was the trouble of her—she gave him no peace; yet quietude was Virginia's dominant characteristic. She never nagged, and it was impossible to quarrel with her, although once or twice she had asserted herself in a fashion that ought to have led to a quarrel, but didn't.

A veil of mystery shrouded her. Nicholas had felt that if he didn't tear it away and discover the manner of woman it so effectually concealed, he would go stark, staring mad.

But lately he had felt differently about her. He felt that he had victimized her. Some trick of memory carried him back to the day of his accident. It was her lunch that he had wolfed that day. He had always remembered Sophie's cookies and the delicious homemade bread and jelly. Nothing like it had ever come his way before.

hi-

he

u-

ht

k-

er

nis

T-

k.

he

er

r-

f-

of

in

ne

r,

ie

e

i-

P

d

d

h

1,

n.

e

d

t

e

r

Even then he had ill-used Jinny, the generous little girl who had so willingly given him her lunch. He had taken her food and forgotten all about her, even the fact that she was the same little girl who had been pushing him when the swing broke. It seemed curious that Jinny should have remembered the accident, and even his name—that it should have troubled her.

And now they were married!

He shifted restlessly on the broken couch and waited for her to come out of the scullery. He wanted to talk to her. Why couldn't Marietta wash the dishes?

It was a gray, dankly cold afternoon. The leafless vine scratched and tapped at the side of the window. The clock ticked crankily, and the exhausted fire smoldered in a sulky fashion after its labors on behalf of dinner. The baby was having her nap. She would sleep for another hour, or more.

" Jinny!" Nicholas called.

Virginia appeared instantly, almost as if she had been expecting to be called, as if she had been waiting for that imperative summons before announcing a plan of her own. She wore her hat and coat and a muffler that Marietta had knitted for Nicholas, and her hands were incased in brown cotton gloves. The hat was very shabby, and the coat was a cheap black garment that she had bought ready-made the winter before; yet Virginia was imperishably lovely as she stood in the doorway, mutely questioning her husband.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, a little disappoint-

ed. "Must you go out, Jinny?"

"If you don't particularly need me, Nico."

"I don't need you-I only wanted you.

Where are you going?"

She answered vaguely, and he noticed that her shadowed eyes were faintly rimmed with pink. She had been crying—about her father and mother, of course.

"I just thought I-must get out, Nico.

I won't be long."

"Where are you going?"

"I thought I—I thought I should like to go to vespers."

"Very well," he said grudgingly. "But isn't it early?"

"I thought I'd like to take a brisk walk first. I've got a headache."

He held out his hand. When she gave him hers, he drew her down and kissed her thin cheek.

"Poor old girl! Pretty rotten for you. It's a shame that Mrs. Shaw chose to-day to tell you."

"Oh, the day doesn't matter," Virginia said. "I can't help thinking about them, and wishing they could have seen Cherry. I wish I had written to mother before!"

"I guess that was my fault," Nicholas said contritely. Then he added, with a flash of grim passion: "It's all my fault! I ought never to have taken you away as I did. I must have been mad! Jinny, I love you so much! You've given me everything in the world worth having."

"Oh, Nico!" Her breast rose dramatically, and spots of color suffused her cheeks.

"Oh, Nico! Is that true?"

She clasped her hands together with an ecstatic gesture.

"What on earth?" thought Nicholas.

"Is the kid really crazy fond of me, and keeping it to herself? But why?"

Aloud he said:

"Of course it's true, little fathead! Now trot off and have your walk; but I wouldn't sit too long in church, if I were you. You might catch a chill or something."

Virginia nodded. That hovering smile was etched in the corners of her lips. She looked like a woman in the possession of a precious secret. Nicholas watched her go, embarrassed, awkwardly graceful as she slipped away from his possessive hand.

"The kid's a deep one!" he thought.

"Yet it pleased her when I said that. Perhaps I don't say such things often enough.

Do I? Jinny's a woman, and I oughtn't to forget it, even if she does get me guessing half the time."

After the gate had clicked behind her, he hoisted himself up again and bawled:

" Marietta!"

This time Marietta kept him waiting, and he grew quite peevish before she finally appeared.

"Well?" she inquired sullenly.

"Didn't you hear me?" Nicholas demanded sharply.

"What if I did? Am I your slave?"

He suddenly recollected that she was not his slave, although there had been plenty of times lately when she had seemed to glory in riveting her own chains. "Sorry! I thought-never mind."

Then Marietta turned meek. demure picture of abnegation as she presented, her eyelids lowered, her hands clasped loosely, her attractive, sulky mouth drooping sorrowfully.

"Oh, Mr. Wayne, it's me that should ask your pardon! I didn't mean anything.

Only-"

She peered up at him, hoping, perhaps, that he would ask her what she really had

"Where's your father?" was the ques-

tion he did ask.

Marietta's eyelids lowered again. Little gleams—of anger, perhaps, or of disap-pointment—showed at the corners.

"Dad? Oh, God knows! Making a day of it, I dare say-as well as a night

before and an evening after." "Lonny ought to be careful," Nicholas

said. "Dr. Dessau's stood a lot from him." "Indeed he ought to be careful, Mr. Wayne; but all of us has to stand a lot from somebody-even you do."

Nicholas's lips quivered toward speech, but what he thought he had to say got no

further. He waited.

"Is there anything else you want?" Marietta asked.

"Nothing, thanks. Well, you might put a little coal on the fire. Never mind-perhaps I can manage it myself."

But Marietta was already at the fire, exclaiming pettishly over the neglected con-

dition in which it had been left.

"I suppose," she drawled, between pokes and shakings, "she was in such a hurry to get out that she couldn't wait for-for anything."

Nicholas assumed, and quite correctly, that Marietta was referring to Virginia. Her impertinent manner angered him. Yet wasn't it both ungrateful and undignified to quarrel with Marietta? The girl didn't know any better. One made a mistake in taking the slightest notice of her.

Poor child! Motherless, and although old Lonny was a good enough sort, one could scarcely call him a model father. Marietta carried a burden on her shoulders. A pretty girl, too, if she didn't always look so devilish cross, and if she would learn to

dress a little less obviously.

With the eye of an artist, Nicholas examined Marietta's attire. Her dress was of red velvet - or velveteen - very short and skimpy, and embellished with a black

cotton-back satin sash. A long string of cheap crystal beads swayed from her neck and got in her way as she bent over the scuttle. She maneuvered her hands daintily. Virginia would have had hers black after a scuffle with the coals. Marietta was quick and sure on those high heels; her red hair glistened with pomade, and had been rigorously marcelled.

In her way she was as mysterious as Virginia, but Marietta's might be described as an obvious mystery. She was out to attract-whom, what? At the same time she baffled. She had her sincerities, too. There was no reticence in her adoration of Cherry. She was like a fawning dog over the baby. She hated Virginia, yet there was a reticence about that. She would do all manner of disagreeable tasks for Virginia. She would be what Virginia called "kind," and yet she would be fierce and ugly and mean about it.

Nicholas groaned in spirit.

"Heaven save me, but every woman I get to know teaches me almost too much, and I'm beginning to think I can't assimilate any more knowledge. What did Marietta mean about Jinny's being in such a hurry to get out? Or didn't she mean anything? Was it just her pleasant little mean

"The fire'll burn now," Marietta said. "The stove could do with a blacking, but it has to be cold. I'll black-lead it first thing in the morning. Would you like some

tea, Mr. Wayne?"
"Good Heavens, no! Just finished

" Shall I bring my sewing down and keep you company?"

"Thanks - er - my wife will be back

presently."

Marietta was putting some plates straight on the dresser, and her back was toward him. Her shoulders heaved in a skeptical shrug, and she muttered below her breath, but sufficiently clear to be heard:

"I wouldn't be too sure about that, if

I was you."

Nicholas dragged himself to a sitting position. He was thoroughly angry now, and when his temper was roused no power on earth could check it. He would have a low, vulgar row with Marietta Collins, and get it over. It would do him good. He needed a row, some outlet for the pent-up emotions bred of these weeks of lying here so helpless, thinking of death and life and

love and art, and wondering where the money was coming from to support any or

all of them.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me what you mean," he rapped out; "instead of slyly beating around the bush all the time and throwing out dark hints. What do you mean? If you don't mean anything, you'd better say so darned

quick."

7. /. t-1-1-1-

I

n

t

t

e

d

f

d

de

He didn't believe that he had frightened Marietta, although she gave an impression of wishing him to believe it. She took a cotton handkerchief with a border of cheap lace from the folds of her bodice, shook it out, thereby drenching the atmosphere with a musty odor purporting to be perfume, and pressed it to her quaking mouth. The gesture was theatrical, and would have amused Nicholas had he not been aware of some deadly purpose behind it.

The last "I'm not going to tell you. time I told you, you pretty near snapped my head off. Not for me-again!"

"You'd better tell me! Here, don't you

go away!"

She was starting for the door. With an effort of which he had not known himself capable, Nicholas rose to his feet and lurched to intercept her. He caught hold of the girl's round, warm arms, and felt the quickening blood throb under the pressure of his fingers.

Marietta swayed close to him, and began to shiver and cry a little, her red head bumping against his chest, a helpless sort of terror engulfing her. Was it all acting?

"What's the matter with you? Don't be a silly little fool! I'm not going to eat you. You began it, Marietta, and, by God, you've got to finish it! D'you understand? You said something, hinted somethingyou're always doing it, but this was something particular."

"Let me go!" shrieked Marietta.

He let her go, with disgusted violence. What had he been doing, holding her arms Spiteful little devil! Suppose like that?

Jinny had come in?

Marietta became cool and more or less She patted her glistening hair, smoothed down her frock, and shook out her handkerchief again. Nicholas decided that he had really been moved to quarrel with her because the reds of her hair and of her dress were so frankly at war that he had succumbed instinctively to their martial suggestion.

Although she had clamored for release, she did not immediately take advantage of her opportunity. In fact, she lingered.

"Well?" Nicholas inquired.

"It's all very well for her," Marietta panted. "You're fond of her. It's always the way! If I told you what I know, you'd only go for me, same as you did before; but I will tell you! You can kill me if you like, but I will tell you! Where's your wife gone? Do you know?"

Nicholas choked, and could get no further. He sat down on the couch and held himself rigidly attentive. Marietta was talking-wildly, breathlessly, as if she

feared interruption at every word.

"He was waiting there in the Café des Touristes-you know, Gidot's café-drinking coffee, and looking out of the window, watching, waiting—that Sir Davies man, the one who came before, when I caught them - him and her - holding hands and crying over each other. You know, I told you, and you were so angry. Your wife! I was telling you about her, and you wouldn't listen. But it's true-true! She's deceiving you. Oh, Mr. Wayne, believe me-I know the world. It's all just rotten. You're too good, too trusting. There isn't many men-well, never mind about that! But I had to tell you, and anyway, you made me. You said I must tell you—"
"This is all a pack of lies!" Nicholas

gasped. "You-you red-headed fiend! I

don't believe a word of it."

Marietta's face turned deathly white. Even her lips were pale.

"Why should I lie to you?" she asked in a hoarse whisper.

" I-oh, I don't know. Because you dis-

like my wife, I suppose."

"I don't dislike her-not always. believe me or not, as you please. Why don't you ask her? Tell her I saw him, and see what she says!"

"You'd better go upstairs now," Nich-

olas replied.

Marietta hesitated for a moment; then she went slowly out, walking a little insecurely, as if for the first time aware of her

perilous footgear.

Nicholas sat on the couch for a few moments, staring out of the window. short December day was drawing in, and it looked chill and gray outside. He hated the sound of the vine tapping at the pane, just like the dry fingers of some dead thing.

"Why don't you ask her? See what she says!"

Marietta's impassioned voice seemed still to echo from every corner of the room.

What should he ask Jinny?

Oh, why be stupid and try to deceive oneself? Marietta's meaning had been plain enough. In his mind's eye, Nicholas pictured the scene-Gidot's café, where Marietta always bought her wine. It was at Gidot's that Nicholas had caught Nevill Davies waiting that other time, only Marietta knew nothing about that. waiting there all this Christmas afternoon to keep a secret appointment with Virginia! He'd had a long wait. That Mrs. Shaw had taken up unexpected time, and had thrown dinner back considerably; but he had waited, no doubt, and Jinny was with Was it, indeed, Marietta who him now. had lied?

After a little while Nicholas dragged himself into the bedroom and completed his imperfect toilet. He was going out, if it killed him. He was going to find them, no matter how long it took.

First he would go to the Café des Tour-

istes. They might still be there.

He found his overcoat and put it on, but Virginia had taken his scarf. Very well, he would catch cold, and perhaps worse—which would be a good job. His sticks? Confound it, where were they? Hidden! No, here behind the door. His hat? That had entirely disappeared. However, if he was going to catch cold, he could manage it more successfully without a hat.

Marietta popped her head in at the door

like a crimson jack-in-the-box.

"You're never—no, you're not! Mr. Wayne, you must be mad. What would the doctor say? Oh, Mr. Wayne, please!"

He pushed her aside and stumped through the kitchen to the garden door, Marietta following, picking at his sleeve, whining, pleading.

"Oh, Mr. Wayne, you look so dreadful! Your face is so white! You mustn't go out! Why, you're scarcely supposed to be out of bed. You'll catch your death of cold! Oh, what shall I do?"

"Mind your own business," stormed Nicholas. "Since you want to know, that's

what you can do!"

He flung recklessly out of the house, scarcely leaning on the sticks at all. The wind tossed his hair into violent disorder, and his black eyes glittered wildly.

" I'm going mad," he thought to himself. "This is awfully funny-me going mad because of a woman who doesn't care a damn for me! I wonder what Toinette and the others would say to that! Serve me right! Toinette would laugh, if she's still alive. The last time I saw her she said she was going to drown herself. Well, I might do worse than that—only the river's so beastly cold. It would be just my luck. too, if somebody pulled me out. I don't love her. I hate her-sly, deceitful woman! That's her mystery—as old as Egypt -a wife deceiving her husband! Pretending to be pleased because I said she'd made me happy! Thought she'd pulled the wool over my eyes nicely-and so she had! If it hadn't been for Marietta-"

He went on, muttering at first, then speaking aloud. It seemed to himself that he shouted. He had to shout, to hear his own thoughts above the hum of the wind.

Something very strange had happened as regarded his infirmity. He was not depending upon his sticks; he was not even limping; yet he failed to notice this tremendous thing. He who could scarcely remember the sensation of walking freely, like other men, was striding along with almost the gait of an athlete.

At the bottom of the hill he made for the bright lights of the Café des Touristes. From outside he could see the whole room. It was fairly crowded with dancers now, and all the little tables were occupied. Was it necessary to go in? Neither Virginia nor Nevill Davies was there. Of course Virginia wouldn't show herself in that mob of peasants. He might have realized that before.

A little less swiftly, Nicholas mounted the hill again. Then it suddenly dawned upon him that he was walking free, upright, and swinging his sticks instead of leaning upon them. He went breathless, almost with a feeling of nausea. Yes, he must be mad to imagine such a thing, for it could only be pure imagination.

He halted outside the doctor's villa and leaned against the wall. He lifted his sticks, and looked doubtfully at them. What would happen if he were to throw them away? Would that also be imagination? Suppose he threw them into the middle of the road, and then tried to walk over and pick them up?

It was probably just momentary—the result of agitation, of shock. What was it

that big doctor from the institute had said? Something to do with nerve centers, and that they shouldn't have kept him strapped to a board all those years.

lf.

ıd

a

te

ve

's id

I

's

'nt

n-

pt

d-

le

ol

Ιf

n

at

is

d.

d

e-

n

e-

e-

y, 1-

ne

s.

n.

is a e b

ıt

d

of

5,

e

r

d

is

k

"If," the great man had declared, "he could forget himself, he might be cured. Meanwhile, massage and electricity."

Well, he'd had all of that, and he had forgotten himself — forgotten supremely. So Jinny with her infidelity had done him this miraculous service!

He felt like shouting with laughter, but he could only stand there trembling like a baby first learning to walk. The wind rushed by him. It was very dark. The impenetrable blackness was punctured only by the dull red lamp hanging over the doctor's gate, and by a street light here and there down the avenue.

Nicholas's face was wet with perspiration, and he quivered pitifully from head to foot; but he made his experiment with all courage. He flung the two sticks as far as he could. Somewhere on the frozen road they fell with a sharp clatter. Two people went by, and he remained leaning against the wall until they were well past.

"Now! It's like stepping off a cliff into the sea. Yet I did it before, and never even noticed. Why, I walked all the way back from Gidot's swinging 'em. Yes, I did, too! Come on, Nico, don't be a cowardly fool!" He stepped out, at first gingerly, then with a rising confidence that became slightly hysterical and threatened to choke him. He wanted to laugh, and felt tears running down his cheeks. At the curb he missed his step in the dark, and plunged forward, falling heavily upon his hands and knees; but he was up again without giving himself time to think or to be afraid.

He did not find the sticks. They had vanished into the night, and it was dull sport poking about for them, so he gave it up.

"I can get home," he panted. "Yes, I can get home all right!"

He was opposite the doctor's gate, and beyond it he dimly saw the three steps which led up to the garden. Why not go in and proclaim himself to Dr. Dessau? It was surely a fitting moment. He felt that he needed moral support, if not medical treatment.

This precious thing—he dared not risk losing it again. Sheer terror clutched him at the mere idea. To be a cripple again—he who had walked bravely for half an hour after so many years of suffering! No, no! Perhaps Virginia would care for him if he were no longer a cripple.

He went up the three steps with no greater effort than it had taken him to climb the hill above the Café des Touristes. This was a miracle!

(To be continued in the July number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

NOW LOVE IS HERE

Now love is here the dawn comes up With lights and lures more manifold, And brims the lifted poppy cup With brighter gold.

Now love is here the noon distills A richer wine of life for me; A rarer, fairer radiance fills The sky and sea.

Now love is here the evening brings A softer benison of rest; Twilight with more benignant wings Veils east and west.

Now love is here the whole night seems A span of time that nothing mars; And there are sweeter, dearer dreams, And clearer stars.

Cellar-Grown Plants

A MOTHER'S STARVED IMAGINATION IS FED AFTER MANY YEARS OF PATIENCE

By Mella Russell McCallum

HEN Agnes Young was a little girl, she used to visit some remarkable cousins. They lived ten miles away in a rather dilapidated farmhouse—dilapidated, because their father preferred books and meditation to repair jobs. The inside of the house was shabby, and never quite free from dust. The mother found time to play the organ and read poetry and make valentines.

Agnes's own parents were farmers of another sort. They did things on the minute. Law, order, and financial success—that was their rule. It made them uneasy to have their child visit in that irregular household; but they didn't actually forbid it, for Agnes's mother and the valentine-making

mother were sisters.

The cousins' house was a house of jokes and delicious raillery. The cats and dogs—of which there were far too many, from most people's standpoint—were called Cleopatra, Roderick Dhu, Attila, and so on. Even the chickens were christened — Mr. Barlow, Annie Peters, Mrs. Bugsbee, after neighborhood personalities. Agnes's parents said it was ridiculous to see human resemblance in a chicken.

At home a meal was a hasty, heavy rite; but in the cousins' house it was a joy. Experiences were related and embroidered. Books were discussed—not modern books, for this was a semi-pioneer district in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula; but Shakespeare, "Tom Sawyer," "Ivanhoe." If one wished to break forth in song during the consumption of griddle cakes and sirup, there was no one to say nay.

At home Agnes was repressed. She helped her mother, studied her lessons, and went about life sedately. She was a small, slender person with braids of fine brown hair and wide-apart, gray-brown eyes.

When she first went to see her cousins, she used to be shy, nibbling almost furtively at the feast of imagination which they spread. Later she grew bolder, and fed eagerly upon the rich mental fare, until her keen self began to unfold like a cellar-grown plant brought into the light.

Her parents began to notice a tendency to undue gayety whenever she returned from one of those visits. Her parents weren't unkind. They honestly thought they ought to discourage the intimacy. To that end they conspired together, in certain ways that are known to parents.

The summer Agnes was sixteen she didn't go to her cousins' house. She went to her aunt's, in Wainville, and there was a beautiful, unexpected blue silk dress in her bag.

While she was in Wainville the cousins quite suddenly decided to go West. They sold their Michigan farm and departed for

Walton, Kansas.

To her shame be it said that Agnes didn't grieve greatly over the exodus. She had just become acquainted with Calvin Young, and Calvin Young was too important a proposition to leave room for anything else in her heart just then. He was a merchant, sole and successful proprietor of Young & Co., general merchandise, at the age of twenty-three.

Agnes's parents were delighted at the attentions of the tall, blond boy with his cool, close-set blue eyes. Calvin Young was prosperous and moral. Agnes was to be congratulated on two scores—she had escaped bloodlessly from the dangerous embrace of a family of ne'er-do-wells, and had fallen into the arms of a desirable husband.

II

As a young married woman Agnes was happy. She didn't have time to be otherwise, with two babies before her twenty-

first birthday. They lived in a new house that had curly spindles and a cupola. The cupola was the pride of Wainville and of Calvin Young's heart. Agnes herself didn't care much about it. She was too busy to go up there much, although it came to her with a pang, at times, that the view across the checkered fields and woodland from the cupola windows was beautiful.

She did most of the work of the house. Calvin was well-to-do, but he wouldn't have considered it right for his wife not to cook and clean. Agnes never thought of having a hired girl. It wasn't done, save in times

of dire need.

Calvin, Jr., and Mary grew up nicely. People told Agnes that she was lucky to have such good children. Agnes agreed, but she wasn't satisfied with their stolid goodness. She began to remember things about her long-ago cousins—things which Calvin Young, the lover, had pushed out of her mind, but which Calvin Young, the husband, couldn't keep pushed out of her mind.

She began to wish that the spirit of her cousins might live in her children. She tried to encourage it; but Calvin, Jr., took no interest in attributing human characteristics to a flock of chickens, and Mary would rather make doll clothes than listen

to tales about knights and ladies.

Calvin Young was satisfied with his children. He told his wife that he intended to take Calvin, Jr., into the store as soon as the boy finished the eighth grade. He hoped that Mary would get married young.

"I wish you'd send them to the Conroy

high school," Agnes said.

"A waste of time and money. Look at the two educated men in Wainville, Lawyer Heddie and Editor Ables! I could buy them both out with the change in my pocket."

"Money isn't everything, Calvin."

"You'd have them like those cousins of yours that went West, I suppose—strong on book learning, and the house falling down about their ears."

Agnes was silent. She knew that Calvin was jealous of her memories. He never missed a chance to make a thrust like that.

She grew the least bit unhappy—not much so, for she was too busy, and the children were adorable, of course; but sometimes a picture of the group at her cousins' house would rise so vividly in her mind that she would gasp with joy and pain. Sometimes it would be the supper table sur-

rounded by shining faces, with lanky Sam standing at one end, declaiming—accompanied by gestures with his bread and milk spoon:

"I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him."

Sometimes it would be the same table, cleared, lamp in center, circled by young heads bent over books on a winter's evening. The strains of "Loch Lomond" would float in from the wheezy organ in the parlor, and the father would stir from the depths of meditation and take up the words in his untrained, emotion-stirring tenor:

"Oh, ye'll tak' the high road, And I'll tak' the low road, And I'll be in Scotland afore ye!"

Then Agnes, the mother of Calvin Young's children, would shut her eyes hard

to keep the tears back.

She probably idealized those old scenes a bit; but it seemed dreadful for Calvin not to let the children go to high school, where one learned about Shakespeare and history. It seemed dreadful for one person to dare to map out the life of another. Calvin would go on with it, she knew. He always shaped things to his patterns, when he understood his subjects; and he did understand his children, for they were just like him. He had even shaped her.

Gradually Agnes began to feel like an alien to her own. She longed secretly for her cousins. How had she ever allowed herself to be shipped off to Wainville that summer, before they left for the West? Ah, well, she knew now how it had happened—she had been bought by a blue silk dress. And then Calvin had come into her life, and the brave little flower that was herself had gone back to live in its cellar again.

Ш

THEN, after a lapse of eight years, Bert was born; and whether it was from her longings, or whether it was the working of the divine law of averages, he was not a replica of Calvin. Almost from the first Agnes knew him for hers; and when, at the age of three, he told her that a certain knobtoed old rooster looked like grandpa, she was sure of it.

If Bert had been puny or mentally deficient, Calvin would have had more patience with him. He grew into a normal boy, who could get his arithmetic perfectly well when he set himself about it. He could

fill the wood box with alacrity, when he didn't sit down on the woodshed steps to dream. He was cursed with imagination, and for that Calvin never forgave him. He never forgave Agnes, either; for he must have seen by now that his wife was not entirely content to be merely the woman of his fireside.

Bert looked much like the other two, rosy and rugged and brown-haired; but where their eyes were gray-brown, Bert's were blue, like Calvin's, only with this difference—Calvin's eyes were close together, and gleamed like polished stones, while Bert's were wide-set and translucent, with black

shadows in them, and a light.

Agnes used to wonder what plan Calvin would lay out for Bert. He said once that he didn't think Bert would fit into the store with C. J., as young Calvin was now called. One thing she was determined on — Bert

should go to high school.

The special kinship of Agnes and Bert was an annoyance to the rest of the family. Agnes had never played games with the other children, because they hadn't let her; but she and Bert amused themselves together endlessly. They particularly liked to play what they called the geography game.

They were playing it one evening after supper, while Agnes set the bread. She stood sifting flour by the table, the light from the unshaded kerosene lamp bringing her thin frame into bright relief. At thirtynine Agnes was still pleasantly favored, with fine, gentle features and soft, abun-

dant hair.

Bert, ten years old, was slumped on his spine, munching an apple, his feet, in their copper-toed shoes, propped against the hearth of the cook-stove, his hair straggling down his forehead. Across the room, beside a smaller lamp placed on the sewing machine, sat Mary, aged eighteen, sewing industriously. Calvin liked to keep his family in the kitchen. It saved wood and kerosene; and, thanks to Agnes, the kitchen was a rather nice place to be.

" Buenos Aires," said Agnes.

" Sacramento."

What each had to do was to give a geographical name beginning with the last letter of the previous one.

"Old Point Comfort."

" Tennessee."
" El Dorado."

"Oklahoma."

Bert shot his answers swiftly at Agnes. She had to struggle for some of hers.

" Auckland."

"Honestly, ma, it's too silly, the way you fool with Bert! You're like a pair of —I don't know what."

Mary knotted her thread virtuously. She was going to be married soon to a young dairyman whom her father liked.

"Well, I don't know as it hurts anybody," Agnes said; "and it's good for Bertie."

"Good for him! What nonsense!"

"Don't talk to Mary, ma. I said 'Auckland.'"

" Detroit."

" Tallahassee."

Just as Agnes was about to say "England," C. J. came into the house. He was a finely built but rather heavy-footed young man. He sank into a chair wearily, dragging it toward the stove as he did so, and began to take off his shoes. He had hauled a load of goods from Conroy Junction that afternoon.

"Gosh, I'm all in," he said. "I left pa to close up the store. What's there to eat,

ma?"

"Baked beans, still hot in the oven, and biscuits. Mary, you set them out for your brother, and get a pitcher of milk."

Mary arranged the food on the other end of the table at which Agnes was working. The regular dining table over by the window was shrouded for the night in its cheesecloth protection against dust and flies. The cheesecloth peaked up jaggedly in the middle, where it went over the spoonholder and caster. Bert called that peak "our Alp."

Mary moved about prettily and efficiently. C. J. got up and washed his hands, then dragged his chair along the floor to the

table, and began to eat.

"Come on now, ma!" urged Bert.

" England."

" Denmark."

"Has that kid got his arithmetic for tomorrow?" cut in C. J.

Agnes started guiltily. "Have you, Bertie?"

"Oh, C. J. makes me sick! I can get that old long division before school in the morning."

"Bertie, why didn't you tell me you had lessons to do?" demanded Agnes sternly.

"Aw, ma, I can get it easy before the last bell!" Bert uncoiled his spine and

stood up. "Aw, ma—Denmark! Come on with a K word!"

"No, Bertie-you get at your lessons this minute."

"Aw! Say, ma, can I have some beans, too? I'm awful hungry."

" Bert!"

r

g

t

a

d

r

d

s dy k

"Honest, ma-just one spoonful of beans!"

Calvin Young's quick step sounded outside the door.

"Come, come, what's all this?" he inquired, as he came in.

"Bertie's just going to do his sums," ex-

plained Agnes.

"Yes, thanks to me," C. J. grumbled.

"That kid pulls the wool all over your eyes,
ma—playing that fool game, and never letting on he had lessons to get!"

"It was my fault," spoke up Agnes. "I forgot to ask him if he had sums to do this evening. You couldn't very well expect him to—"

"Come, that will do," said Calvin.

Agnes adjusted the flannel blanket over the bread pan jerkily. She glanced at her daughter's calm, intent face above the flying needle. C. J. was drinking milk deeply. Calvin stood watching his youngest child bring book and paper and pencil to the table. The little boy sat down in a screwedup position, with one foot under him, and began to make small, hard figures with his badly sharpened pencil.

Then Calvin seated himself, removed his shoes, and took a newspaper from his pocket. Presently he was dozing.

Agnes moved about quickly, putting things to rights. C. J., satisfied with food, slumped down and dozed also. Mary snapped off her thread.

"There — another tablecloth hemmed! I'll do it up and put it in my box to-morrow. Ma, what makes you let pa and C. J. go to sleep down here?"

"Oh, they might as well," muttered Agnes. "No fun in their heads!"

Her daughter stared.

"Why, what do you mean, ma?"
"Nothing—I don't know myself."

"Well, then, I'm going up to bed. Good night, ma."

"Good night, dear."

She looked wistfully after her girl's pleasant young figure. A shout from Bert made her jump.

"There, darn you!" He was addressing his lesson paper, and jabbing it with his

pencil. "You get in that book, and you stay there—hear? Now, come on with a K word, ma!"

But the shout had aroused Calvin.

"No, you don't, young man! You K word up to bed. It's nine o'clock and after. Your sister's the only sensible one in the house. C. J., go up to bed. There's a hard day to-morrow."

C. J. obeyed willingly. Agnes and Bert climbed the stairs together, swinging hands. Calvin stayed to wind the clock. When he followed them upstairs, his feet, clad only in socks, made a jarring sound — poom,

poom, poom.

Agnes lay thinking. If only Bertie wasn't such a little goose! The idea of his provoking his father that way! He ought to get his sums first, and play after; but he was only a little boy.

"Oh, Bertie!" she said to herself.

"Never mind, you'll have more sense one of these days, and then you and I'll have good times together!"

IV

When the subject of more schooling for Bert came up, Agnes asserted herself for the first time in her married life. She took her courage in both hands, and threatened to leave Calvin if he didn't let Bert go to the Conroy high school.

Calvin laughed at her.

"If you left, where would you go? You know your folks wouldn't back you up." "I won't go to my folks. I'll work some-

where, and I'll take Bert with me!"

That night he found her packing a canvas telescope bag. She pretended not to see him. That gave him time to save his selfrespect.

"I've been thinking that maybe it would be a good thing for Bert to go to the Con-

roy school," he began pompously.

Agnes averted her eyes. She dared not flaunt her victory. She unpacked the telescope as if it were one of her regular eve-

ning tasks.

With Bert gone, the house would have been terrible, but for the thought that now he was getting what she wanted him to have. He was studying history and literature; mathematics, too, of course—a necessary evil! The main thing was to line the mind with a background of historical and fictional characters—to create a delightful, padded place for the imagination, so that one would be proof against the alien world,

and be able to fall back on one's own re-

She looked forward to week-ends and va-She borrowed books from Mr. Ables, editor of the local newspaper, and read them during her spare time. Now, very soon, she and Bert would be strong together. They would dare to talk "nonsense" under Calvin's nose.

But they found that they didn't dare, after all, for there was always the possibility of Calvin's taking Bert out of school. They had to be just as guarded as ever. Moreover, to Agnes's disappointment, Bert wasn't content to spend all his leisure with her. He began to go out to socials and

dances.

She wanted him to be normal, of course. She consoled herself by repeating:

"Never mind, some time you and I'll

have good times together, Bert!"

Four years passed, and Bert was nineteen, and about to graduate. Agnes was to go to Conroy for the event.

She was glad that a new baby prevented Mary from going, that Calvin thought he couldn't leave the store, and C. J. didn't want to go. She wanted to go alone.

She wore the gray silk dress that Mattie Coles, the village dressmaker, had made for her only three years before. Her hat was new-a black, stiff affair of straw braid and ribbon. Calvin kept women's hats in the store. He bought them by the dozen, ready trimmed, from Chicago. Agnes would have liked to have Mattie fashion her a hat of soft gray silk, but Calvin would never have forgiven the extravagance. She especially wanted to keep Calvin good-natured just now, so that he would let Bert go into Mr. Ables's newspaper office.

Bert had wanted her to come the day before and stay overnight at his boarding place, but she couldn't manage that. She took the afternoon train, and arrived in Conroy just in time for supper. The exercises were to be in the Congregational church. Afterward Bert was to accompany

her home on the midnight train.

She wondered if the other mothers in the audience felt as she did. They were as proud, she knew, but she was more than proud. It wasn't the fact that her cleanjawed young man son, with hard-brushed hair and shining eyes, had finished the course creditably. It was because he would now be better able to live in what seemed to Agnes the only way to live.

Afterward, on the train, she expected a torrent of speech from Bert; but none came. Silence in itself was all right, but she knew that something was the matter. Bert was too solicitous about his mother's comfort. Would she like to sit next the window? Would she like some chocolate pepper-Should he put her bag up in the mints? rack? Then he sat silent, staring at the dusty red plush back of the seat ahead.

She reached a hand over to him.

fingers closed on it hard.

" Mother! I—I'm engaged!"

It seemed as if all the life in her had suddenly stopped.

"W-what?" she stammered.

"I hated to tell you, mother, for fearfor fear-"

There must be some mistake about this, she thought. Probably she wasn't sitting in this strange railway coach at all. But Bert's voice went on:

" For fear you wouldn't like it." "Why wouldn't I like it, Bert?"

Her voice sounded a long way off; but Bert must have caught something warm and personal in it, for he gave a short, relieved laugh, and put his arm around her shoulders.

"Tell me all about it."

Under her calm, she was stunned. Bert -why, Bert was only nineteen! Then suddenly her heart leaped. Why not? If Bert had found a sweetheart who would understand-who would help them build a house for souls-why not? Surely Bert could be trusted to find the right sort of a girl for that. It was going to be all right. She could adjust herself-gladly.

"You'll never guess who, mother. Jose-

phine Landon!"

Why, the Josephine Landon! No! Landons were her neighbors, who kept a hardware store in Wainville. Josephine was one of Bert's schoolmates, a pretty girl, dark and dashing, and-oh, practical! During her week-ends she did her father's bookkeeping, saving him the cost of a paid helper. She had taken a prize in mathematics. It couldn't possibly be Josephine Landon!

"What is it, mother?"

The boy's arm tightened about her. She could never deceive Bert.

"Oh, Bertie, I don't know what to say!" "I know she isn't your kind, mother. I —I wish she was; but I can't help it—I've

got to marry her!"

Agnes could understand that. She had felt that way about Calvin. No one had

warned her, but she must try-

"Bertie, I think you're making an awful mistake. She's a fine girl, but—there are little things that count a lot. Not at first, they don't count, but after a while they—they get big. I know you, Bertie. She can't give you those little things."

"I understand what you mean, mother; but we're planning to do a lot of reading together. She admits she's kind of neglected literature. I honestly think—in fact, I'm sure—that I can make her more like

you and me, mother."

Agnes smiled. She had tried to make

Calvin over.

"Josephine will make a grand housekeeper, and—and she'll organize things. She's a saving girl, too; but she won't make you happy."

Bert was silent.

Agnes talked on. She recounted her visits to her cousins, and retold details that Bert had heard before. She told him things that he had never heard before, out of her own experience in arid pastures. Bert kept saying:

"I know-I know!"

Then, when she could say no more, he repeated:

"I can't help it, mother-I can't live

without her!"

There was no answer to that argument. Agnes knew that there never has been any answer to it, since the world began.

They got off the train silently, and walked home. Agnes wished she were dramatically articulate. She wished she could cry out loud to Bert, walking so still beside her, that if he married Josephine, Josephine would crush him; that it would only

be her own story over again.

Bert was like her. He could never stand against the Calvins and the Josephines of the world. He had got a bit farther in soul equipment than she had, but he would never be a match for the efficient Josephine, because, on the face of things, the Josephines and the Calvins are sure to be so irrefutaably in the right!

Calvin laughed loud when he heard the news. It was his idea of a good joke.

"You would have him go to high school, so as to be different from the rest of us—and now he couldn't have done a thing that would have suited me better. It's one on you, wife!"

He never let her forget that joke. He made so much of it that Josephine Landon came to regard Agnes with suspicion. Agnes made Josephine welcome in Bert's home; but she knew that the girl was in league with the other side.

V

Josephine's father had recently visited in Glabo, Missouri. He said there was a good field there for a hardware merchant. He proposed that the young people should marry immediately, and he would set them up in business. Calvin acquiesced heartily. He said it would be the best thing in the world for Bert—would take the cobwebs out of his head.

Agnes thought of Mr. Ables's newspaper office, and suggested that Bert didn't know anything about the hardware business. At which Mr. Landon laughed, and told her not to worry about that, for Josephine knew

all about it.

So, as usual, things were swept along efficiently without her. Glabo, Missouri! It was a long, expensive journey out there. She couldn't expect to see Bert again for

vears.

She wished that she had the courage to go to Mr. Ables and tell him how wrong it all was; but Agnes had an old-fashioned idea of what was in good taste. She couldn't take a personal trouble to an outsider, even though the outsider would understand better than the insiders.

After Bert and Josephine had gone, she and Calvin were alone in the house with the curly spindles and the cupola. Calvin was more considerate of her, now that he

had killed her last dream.

Agnes tried to adopt his angle. They were fortunate. All their children had done well. Mary and her dairyman had a sensible home—no nonsense, plenty of work. C. J. had married a pretty girl with pansy-black eyes, and they lived over the store. Bert had married a splendid girl, with money behind her, and was launched on a business career.

But her own angle was different. She really thought Mary's matter-of-fact household insufferable. She really thought that C. J.'s Pansy-Eyes was stupid, and that it was unnecessarily penurious of them to live over the store. As for Bert—but she dared not think too much about Bert.

Josephine wrote most of the letters that came from Glabo. Agnes knew before she opened them just what Josephine would say. At first it hurt her because Bert seldom wrote; but when he did it hurt her more. For instance:

DEAR MOTHER:

Josephine isn't feeling well to-night, so I'll write instead of her.

We are getting along fairly well with the store. Get up at six, open store at seven, and close at nine, or later. I don't get much time to read these days. It's just as well, I guess, for last week some hot solder flew in my eye, and reading would hurt it more. It's nothing serious.

There's a newspaper here, and the editor is a nice chap, but I don't see much of him. If I don't keep on the job and make a good go, Josephine's father won't discharge our note, as he said.

I often think of the time you and I used to play geography in the kitchen. Those were good old days, eh, mother?

Josephine says it's time to go to bed, and she's dead right. I hope you and father are well.

Your loving son, BERT.

"Well, they're doing fine, aren't they?" was Calvin's comment, as he laid down the letter. "Bert's turning out better than I ever thought he would. He surely was lucky, getting that wife!"

"Calvin, how far is Glabo from Walton,

Kansas?"

"A good long ways, I guess."

Agnes had an idea. She would write to her Cousin Sam, who was a lawyer now, and ask him to go and see Bert some time. She knew that Sam would just as soon use money on railroad fare as on anything else.

VI

YEARS passed. A baby was born to Bert and Josephine. Their store prospered. Once Bert wrote that he had had a short visit from one of his mother's cousins, and that some day he was going over to Walton. It was a hundred and seventy miles from Glabo.

The war came, and the influenza. Wainville lost one per cent of its population from the mysterious epidemic. Josephine's parents, in their vigorous fifties, were stricken and died. The week after that Calvin Young became ill. C. J. telephoned to Conroy for a nurse, but before she came Calvin was dead.

Agnes walked in a terrible dream. The only real thing in the dream was a straight, shining-eyed young man who sometimes sat with his arms around her, and followed her about the kitchen. Then, all too soon, the shining-eyed young man and his wife and baby went off on the train to Missouri. Jo-

sephine said they were losing money every

day they stayed away.

Agnes lived on alone in the house—an old house now. C. J. promptly bought out his brother's share in the store, and settled with the dairyman for Mary's share. Now C. J. was sole owner, aside from his mother—and he didn't count her. He gave her money when she asked for it, and paid her small bills and the taxes. She used to wish sometimes that he would give her the exact earnings of her one-third interest. She wondered how much they really amounted to; but he never mentioned such a business-like thing as that, and, since she was his mother, she never asked him.

Some mornings she would wake up with such a feeling of hopelessness that she wondered what her life had been worth, after all. She and Calvin had been happy for a brief space, and people said that she had reared her children successfully. Well, perhaps C. J. and Mary were successful. Certainly they were self-satisfied; but Bert was a failure, even though he was making

money

Bert was dying of malnutrition of the soul—and it was his mother's fault. She had been a weakling. Her best self had starved in a cellar; and now Bert's sensitive, imaginative soul was likewise doomed to live whitely, away from light and air.

Bert had wanted to enlist, but Josephine had opposed it. Bert had not desired to claim exemption. Josephine said that the business would go to ruin if he went away, and that it would break her heart, and that he ought to think of his baby and his poor widowed mother. All those things Bert wrote to Agnes—between the lines. She used to wish he could get away—even to war.

Josephine managed the Glabo Red Cross. Josephine could make marvelous pie crust with oatmeal flour. Josephine was an officer in the ladies' auxiliary of the Oddfellows.

She and Bert never came to Wainville. They were always coming the next summer—after the Christmas trade—in the spring;

but they didn't come.

People began to call Agnes queer, because she stayed alone so much. She read a great deal, and thought a great deal when she dared. Mary wanted her mother to come and live with her, and let C. J. have the house; but Agnes was wise. She liked better to drink her tea with a book propped up against the old blue sugar bowl. She and Mary would only annoy each other. As for C. J.'s wife, Agnes knew that she would not want to take care of the big bouse.

She didn't sweep and dust the whole house as often as she used to. She kept the kitchen immaculate, and did the rest when the mood was on her. She bought a shade for the kitchen lamp. Calvin had objected to shaded lamps.

She made a delicately pleasant picture, had she but known it, sitting by the lamp, reading. Her hair had taken its gray gently, and her cheeks were like a rose that is just beginning to fade. There was a frail distinction about Agnes at fifty-nine.

One night, as she sat reading, a boy brought her a telegram. Josephine was dead—pneumonia, induced by overwork at a charity bazaar.

She tried to grieve. Josephine had been a successful woman. Everything she had set her hand to had turned out well; but, try as Agnes might, her thoughts turned, not on Bert's loss, but toward his future.

What next for Bert? Had the store—business—got into his blood? Had Josephine accomplished that before she left?

It was likely that Bert would want her to come and keep house for him, and take care of little Philip; but Agnes wasn't sure that she wanted to. Not if Bert had turned into a machine! She wasn't even sure that she wanted to see Philip—Josephine's son.

Bert wrote that he would be home as soon as he could arrange it; but he had written that for years.

A month later, as she sat reading "Evangeline," she heard Bert's step on the back porch, accompanied by another step that she didn't recognize. Suddenly she found herself part of a three-cornered hug. Why—why, was Philip as tall as that? Ten years old? She felt a small, lean arm around her waist, and held her own arm low to include him.

Bert explained that they had come straight from Walton, not Glabo.

"And this old man here ought to get right to bed," he said. He indicated the boy, and Agnes saw that there were rings of fatigue about Philip's gray-brown eyes. "Can he have some bread and milk, mother?"

Agnes bustled around, setting out bowls and spoons, while Bert washed the boy's hands and face at the sink. "I'm in the fifth grade, grandma," Philip said. "Cousin Sam gave me 'Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare."

Agnes smiled and nodded. She was tinglingly curious; yet she was content just to be serving them. What a straight boy Philip was!

They tucked the youngster into bed, and returned to the kitchen. Bert put a stick of wood into the stove, then began to range about nervously. Agnes sat on the edge of a chair.

"You say—you just came from Sam's?" she asked haltingly.

" Yes."

Bert halted, his hands in his pockets. At thirty there was little of the boy about him. His hair was slightly gray, and his figure was hard, rather than lithe. There were lines of toil in his face. He drew a deep breath.

"You know, ever since Cousin Sam came to see me that time, I've planned to go to Walton; but Josephine didn't like him. He dumped his cigar ashes in his saucer, and—well, you know how things go, mother. I never got started."

"I know, Bertie!"

Their eyes met. He came over to her chair, and flung himself down beside her, with his head in her lap.

"Oh, mother, mother!"

Then, while she smoothed his hair, he went on talking. He had found the cousins, Sam, and Gordon, who was a doctor, and Madge, who kept house for Gordon and ran a circulating library, and Sam's boy, just back from the university. They had taken him into their hearts at once, and had insisted that he should sell his store in Glabo and locate in Walton. He had agreed, and had already made a payment on a small business there.

" Hardware, I suppose?"

"Hardware nothing! I hope I never see another length of gutter pipe—never! I've bought a newspaper, mother—a little, rusty country newspaper!"

"But can you run a paper now, Bertie? You've been a hardware man a good many years."

"Hear the woman!" Bert jumped up and stretched out his arms. "That's just the reason I can run it! I know how to keep down the overhead. Business is business, you know. I'm pretty well hammered into shape, when it comes to running a business. Besides, I don't want to get rich.

I want to make just enough to buy books with, and educate Phil."

Agnes nodded.

"And, mother, your Cousin Madge has rented a house for you and Phil and me. If we like it, we'll buy it. It hasn't any cupola, and there are only five rooms to clean; but there's a big bay window in the living room, and a fireplace, and bookshelves—built low, so that even a small chap can reach them. Could you go next week, mother?"

"Yes, Bertie, I guess I could."

"And say, you know our old geography game? Phil's daft over it. You'll have to hustle to keep up with him!"

"I can manage. I've been reading a lot of late years."

Agnes leaned back suddenly, and relaxed. It was the first complete mental relaxation she had dared indulge in since she was a child.

She wished that she were dramatically articulate, and could shout out what was in her heart; but she would have to leave that sort of thing to Phil. Even Bert could never free himself entirely from the effects of long-continued repression.

"When you were a boy," she told her son, "I used to say to myself, 'We'll have good times together some time, Bert and I!' And now there's Phil, too!"

NEW ROSES FOR OLD

When last I saw this opening rose
That holds the summer in its hand,
And with its beauty overflows
And sweetens half a shire of land,
It was a black and cindered thing
Drearily rocking in the cold,
The relic of a vanished spring—
A rose abominably old.

Among the stainless snows it grinned,
A foul and withered shape that cast
Ribbed shadows, and the gleaning wind
Went rattling through it as it passed;
It filled the heart with a strange dread;
Haglike, it made a whimpering sound,
And gibbered like the wandering dead
In some unhallowed burial ground.

Whoso on that December day
Had seen it so deject and lorn,
So lone a symbol of decay,
Had dreamed of it this summer morn,
Divined the power that should relume
A flame so spent, and once more bring
That blackened berry back to bloom—
Who could have dreamed so strange a thing?

Old is the moral as the skill
Of that mysterious mage unseen,
With busy purpose changing still
The wrinkled leaf back to the green,
Transforming bitter into sweet
And sorrows old to bridals new,
Filling with swiftness weary feet,
And blessing withered hearts with dew!

The Crimson Monkey

WAS IT THE HOODOO OR THE MASCOT OF THE BATTERED OLD OCEAN TRAMP MATILDA?

By Henry Holt

THE rusty, clanking old steam tramp Matilda—a seagoing pig, according to her long-suffering crew—wallowed her way to the pile wharf at Iloilo.

McDonald, the engineer, had temporarily given up swearing at her, for even his vocabulary was inadequate. Why her engines didn't all come unstuck, and settle like evil sediment in one unholy junk pile on the ship's bottom, was a perpetual mystery to him. The Matilda was reputed to be the oldest steam-driven craft in the Pacific, and her internal mechanism suffered from practically every complaint known to marine engineers.

McDonald stumped forward, climbed the bridge companion, and approached the skipper with easy informality. Dave Fenton and he were shipmates of twenty years' standing. Equally they shared ownership of the Matilda. Equally they sorrowed in their possession, for the Matilda was a good ship to lose money with. In the trade she was known by various unpleasant names, some of them frankly obscene. She had come near to being the graveyard of her present owners' fortunes.

It had been a variegated score of years in which the master mariner and McDonald had stuck together. The first vessel they bought jointly was sunk off Hatteras by some mad-brained skipper who drove full tilt into them. Insurance covered only a part of that loss.

Dipping deeply into their pockets, they bought another ship. A pilot put her aground well up the Amazon, and, though she came off again, they lost months of trading while she lay in dry dock. They sold her eventually, bought a seagoing tug, and for a twelvemonth managed to pick up a precarious livelihood outside Sydney Harbor.

After that there was a pearling speculation, which set them on their feet for a space; but fate still had one watchful eye on them. If ever they got two rungs up the ladder, they were pulled back. For a decade they became pawns in some inscrutable game played by unseen powers. It was as if a sneer ever lurked in fortune's smile.

Grimly they hung on, battling with the sea and with things they could not understand, sometimes able to send only a bare pittance to their families, who lived cheek by jowl up in Vermont. The Matilda had now been their weary burden for eighteen months, and gradually she was sucking their figurative life's blood.

For a while, to save insurance, they carried their own risk, whereupon a gale beat the ship almost to a pulp, and the repair bill left a mortgage on her. Increasing the mortgage, they bought a cargo of spices on the African coast, and a leaky patch in the Matilda's side wasted ten thousand dollars' worth of the stuff under her hatches. Her cylinder heads were defective, her steam pipes were everlastingly cracking, and the whole engine had begun to show a tendency to rock on its foundations.

"Our luck's clean oot, cap'n," said the engineer, cutting off a large wad of black tobacco and placing the titbit under his tongue, as he gained the skipper's side on the bridge. "We'll ha' to lie here at Iloilo full four days for repairs afore I dare drive her to sea again."

Captain Fenton glanced at his partner. This was bad news. An eight-hundred-ton steamer lying idle for four days is worse than a white elephant to owners whose pocketbooks are empty.

"Well, you're the doctor, Sandy," he said at last, beckoning to the second mate.

"There's an hour's run yet. Guess we'll slip below and have a little something."

They were curiously in contrast, this pair, as they entered the old man's cabin. Dave Fenton, with threescore years to his credit, and a lifetime of failure behind him, was yet something of an optimist. Even when things looked blackest, a twinkle in the skipper's pale blue eyes saved Sandy McDonald from yielding to utter melancholia. Sandy's face was heavily crisscrossed with lines limned by toil and care. The engines of the Matilda had done their full share to take the desert color out of his hair, but trouble had come in a ceaseless stream during all the years of their precarious partnership.

The Scot poured himself out three fingers of gin, held the glass up with an oily hand, raised it to his lips—and then put the liquor down untouched, his eyes fixed on an object over the skipper's shoulder. It was a carved monkey smeared grotesquely with scarlet pigment. It had rested on the same shelf ever since he and Dave Fenton took over the Matilda, and on similar shelves in the skipper's various cabins

for at least ten years.

"Dave," the engineer said in an oddly serious voice, "I'm going to ask you a question. You tote that blame thing along everywhere. Why? There's nae superstition in ma make-up, but what's the matter with dumpin' it overboard?"

Dave Fenton mixed his own grog with

a steady hand.

"And yet you say there's no supersti-

tion in you?" he observed quietly.

"Why, yes, but ye'll no deny that we've been carryin' a hoodoo aboot with us for a long month o' Sundays. We've both sweated for a livin' since we were kids, and what have we got noo? About half shares in this crazy bunch of trouble, and she isn't worth ten cents, except for junk. Last time she went under survey it was just a plain miracle that they let her go to sea again. If you an' me weren't takin' a chance along with the crew, I'd say we deserve to be sent to the penitentiary for risk-in' human life!"

There was sufficient truth about this to hurt Dave. He chewed the end off a black

cigar.

"I bought that monkey at Vera Cruz," he said. "Don't know why, but I kind of liked it, see? There's monkeys and monkeys, but this little chap's got a cheerful

look about him. We were sailing the Salutarias in them days, you'll remember. I stuck him up on a shelf in my cabin to bring us luck."

"Well, hasn't it-rotten luck?"

The skipper puffed at his cigar thought-

fully before he answered.

"Sandy, I ain't denyin' that you and me's headin' straight for the poorhouse. I ain't denyin' that we look like being jammed tight in a corner, with a derned thin chance to get out of it. We've both worked almighty hard, and got mighty little to show for it. If anything happens to this ship, we'll never get another, and at our time o' life owners would laugh if we asked to be put on a reg'lar pay roll. 'Cordin' to schedule, we ought to be going home now with a wad and raisin' chickens for a hobby, though pigs are my partic'lar fancy. Allus wanted to grow pigs-prize Berkshire pigs. Ever seen 'em, Sandy? They do your eyesight good. I want 'bout a dozen of 'em in a little farmyard; and when it's blowin' all hell out at sea I want to walk down into that little farmyard and watch-"

"Dave, it's monkeys I'm talkin' aboot, not pigs. Let's heave the thing over the

side, just for luck!"

"After I've carried it everywhere?" The skipper lifted one eyebrow in query. "You've another guess coming, Sandy. Maybe pigs are going to be off the map for me. Maybe we'll both go broke, and have to work our passages back to the United States, peeling potatoes; but that little old monk—well, I guess he'll stay right where he is." The skipper stuck down a rebellious leaf on the cigar. "Pigs, Sandy, in a farmyard that don't throw you all over the place every time a storm starts blowin'! Ever get the idea?"

"Pigs nothing!" retaliated the engineer, a dreamy look drifting into his pale blue eyes. "If ever I'd had ma way, I'd hae settled doon wi' ma family on an island near Fiji, farming silkworms. Mon, there'd be big money in it. If ever I could

scrape together-"

"You mean you'd work?" asked the

skipper.

"Ain't pigs going to be work?" retorted Sandy. "Noo, Dave, how about throwin'

that monkey overboard?"

For answer, the skipper silently finished his grog and walked to the bridge; and Sandy, with one last look at the scarlet

thing on the shelf, shook his head and returned to his laboring inferno below.

AT Iloilo, when McDonald tackled the job of fixing the engines, he found the trouble more serious than he had anticipated. He and his staff slaved night and day for sixty hours, and then had to begin all over again. It was eight days before the halting Matilda was able to put to sea, and even then Sandy McDonald's heart was filled with misgivings.

"We ought to ha' had another hundred ton o' coal, too, Dave," he said; "but it's an awful sinful price at Iloilo. I guess we'll just be able to make Fiji comfortably with what we've got in the bunkers. Coal's

cheaper there."

For long leagues the Matilda pounded and thrashed her way with so few signs of faltering that Sandy, instead of being jubilant, began to grow nervous. This was not

the Matilda's way.

"It's as if she was savin' up for something terrible," Sandy observed fearfully to the skipper. "That patch I put on at Iloilo ought to last a good while, but there's a hundred other things all due to go wrong any minute."

Dave Fenton stroked his scanty beard. The barometer was dropping ominously, so he had cares of his own. Such antics of the barometer, with the moon in that quarter, right in the middle of the hurricane season, were enough to keep any master mariner from falling asleep at the switch.

"I guess we'll be all right, Sandy," he

That had been his sermon for a good many years; but twelve hours later, when the hurricane burst over them, Dave Fenton felt considerably less assurance. lashed everything securely, turned the ship's bluff nose into the wind, and waited for her to ride it out or break her back in the process.

Dave figured that at times the wind, which well-nigh tore the Matilda apart, was rushing by at more than eighty miles an hour. And yet the skipper had one consolation-at the end of three days the racing mountains of water that hurled the rusty tramp about like an empty bottle told Dave that he was missing the worst

of it.

Even on the outer edge of that elemental upheaval, however, he had sickening moments of suspense, when the ship lay over in her agony, threatening never to right herself, or when, with her propeller clean out of the water and racing madly, she tried to shake herself to pieces. It was the worst weather Captain Fenton had known during many a year, and in seven days he snatched perhaps a bare dozen hours of sleep; but every time his gaze traveled away to the westward, he wondered exactly what would have happened had the Matilda been, say, a day's run farther over in that direction.

"It's fair hell here," he muttered, his bloodshot eyes resting sleepily on the tumult-racked waters where the heart of the hurricane raged; "but I guess they've had a dose over there that 'd break any-

thing afloat!"

Even so, it was bad enough for the owners of the Matilda. That rusty old baggage of the sea had remained affoat by a miracle only. Her decks had been swept clean as a whistle by the first big wave that hit her. Not a boat remained, nor davits to hold a boat. Stanchions were twisted or gone. Abaft the funnel twelve fathom of rail had been carried overboard.

To make matters worse, the strain had opened an old wound in the ship's side. She was leaking-leaking so fast that the

pumps barely held their own.

A living gale was still raging when Sandy McDonald stood, stripped to the waist, in the superheated, din-ridden engine room, wondering as he had not wondered since the days of his youth. Never for more than a moment did his eyes leave the gages, never did his hand or voice fail to respond to the engines' slightest want; but never, through it all, did he cease to wonder.

He doubted whether the machinery had ever had a severer test, and he was wondering all the time just how many more minutes it was going to bear the strain. The instant those horizontals ceased to groan and shiver, the pumps would stop. The old tub would lose steerage way, turn broadside on to the waves, and be

swamped.

Anyhow, even if the gale stopped now, they would be in a desperate plight, for they had been steaming practically a week without making appreciable headway, and the coal was nearly gone. Already the ordinary bunkers had been swept out. Sandy had fallen back on the reserve, and every shovelful thrown on the furnaces brought

the Matilda one step nearer the inevitable moment when, for want of fuel, she must float helpless, like an overfed hog, awash

and impotent.

As near as Sandy could figure out, the coal reserve would keep them running for four more days. After that he and the skipper might just as well light their pipes and wait. If the Matilda kept afloat, some vessel might happen along and let them have a little coal. It might! They were well off the beaten track, but there was always hope.

III

DULL-EYED, almost sleeping where he stood, Sandy continued to wonder for another day or two until the prankish hurricane, as if weary of the game, suddenly went elsewhere. From a blatant sky the sun beat down fiercely, and not the faintest breeze stirred. Only the long, mountainous swell remained, heavy, but unbroken.

Sandy and his partner foregathered in

the skipper's cabin.

"Weel!" said the engineer, wiping beads of sweat from his brow with a dirty piece of waste. "This is about the end of a'

things!"

"It's pretty bad, Sandy," agreed the old man, throwing open the porthole for air; "but I guess we'll be all right. It's a tidy step from here to Vermont, though, I'll allow."

A deck hand poked his nose into the cabin with a message from the mate on the

bridge.

"Mr. Barnes says there's somethin' on the starboard bow, sir—not far off the Chicani Rock."

"With a bit of luck, that means coal, Sandy," said the skipper. "Man, we'll be

all right!"

He pottered forward to the bridge.

But things were not as he anticipated. They were not, indeed, as any one could have anticipated. As they drew near the Chicani Rock, a lonely menace to which sailors usually give a wide berth, Sandy McDonald joined the skipper on the bridge. When his brain took in the situation, he gripped Dave Fenton's arm, speechless with excitement.

One of the big Green Diamond liners, with maybe a thousand souls aboard, was lying within half a mile of the dreaded Chicani and flying the most desperate signal known to men of the sea.

"Dear God!" exclaimed the skipper.

"Sandy, it's a salvage job, and we've got no coal!"

"Salvage!" muttered the engineer, scarce

believing his eves.

Sailors pray for salvage all their lives, and when it comes it may be an empty coal hulk or a half ruined schooner; but here was a Pacific greyhound right under their nose, sorely wounded and begging for help. Somewhere hereabouts she had battled for days with the worst fury of that terrific hurricane, until she had been reduced from a thing of proud beauty to a broken, limping creature, with her decks swept bare. She was canting over to starboard at a dangerous angle. Part of the bridge, even, had been claimed by the sea.

"Leggo my arm!" snapped the skipper, shaking himself free, as he awoke to the

full possibilities of the position.

"Losh, man!" said the engineer in an awed voice. "She's in a bad fix! Her engines have gone to glory! Broken her main shaft, I expect. What can we do,

Dave? What can we do?"

"Darned if I know yet," retorted the skipper, thrusting a fresh cigar between his teeth. He could always think best that way, and here was the one occasion of his life to do some tall thinking. "Wait till we get within hailing distance. Meanwhile, slip below and see exactly what coal we've got left. There's not much, but I want to know exactly—exactly, mind—how long it 'll last if we drive this packet at full speed. Come and let me know soon's you can."

Sandy scuttled from the bridge. His brain was aflame. Here, dangling under their noses, was wealth, comfort, leisure for the rest of their lives; and yet at the crucial moment there had come a poison-

ous fly in the ointment-no coal!

He was hurrying past the skipper's cabin when a queer thought assailed him. Fiendish ill luck had pursued them long enough. Sandy acted on the spur of the moment. Afterward the skipper could say what he liked, but no scarlet monkey hoodoo was going to interfere with a situation of this sort. Perhaps it was only silly superstition, but latterly the idea had taken firm root in Sandy's mind that Dave's monkey was queering things for them. Anyhow, it wouldn't queer this!

He dived into the cabin, grabbed the scarlet monkey, pitched it bodily out of

the open porthole, and then hurried down to see about the coal.

By the time Sandy McDonald returned to the bridge, Dave Fenton was just reaching for a megaphone.

We can steam hard at it for four hours,

no longer," reported Sandy.

The skipper made a wry grimace, then raised the megaphone to his lips.

"You want assistance?" he shouted across the narrowing space to the other

"Yes! Get a move on!" came in reply. "We've lost our propeller. We've only got one anchor left, and she's dragging that. We'll be ashore if you aren't quick. Five thousand dollars if you pull us out of this!"

Already Dave had had a stout wire hawser got ready. He spat orders like a machine gun, and in five minutes he had maneuvered near enough to pick up a line. When that had been accomplished, and the hawser was being drawn across, he reached for the megaphone once more.

"Five thousand dollars don't buy this tow, mister!" he bellowed forth. "It's a man-size salvage job. I've been wanting

it for fifty years."

The hawser was being made fast. Already Dave had begun to draw away.

" Make it twenty thousand, then!" came from the other vessel's captain. "We're in wireless communication with one of our own steamers. She'll be here to pick us up

in another eight hours.'

Eight hours! And the Matilda only had coal enough to steam for half that time! Dave bit hard on his cigar. With a strong tide running and the enormous dead weight of a laden Green Diamond liner astern, the little tramp steamer would have a hard

"It's a regular salvage job or nothing!"

he barked back across the water. "Call it a deal at fifty thousand, then,"

suggested the liner's master as the hawser tightened.

" For the love of Mike, take him on at

that!" begged Sandy at the skipper's elbow.
"Mr. McDonald," said Dave acidly, "are you drawin' this cat, or am I? You attend to your job, and the court 'll award us a hundred thousand dollars for to-day's work-if we do it; but we haven't finished yet by a jugful. Now get below, and I'll talk turkey to yon feller!"

With no alternative, the liner's master finally agreed to Dave Fenton's condition of full legal salvage money, and the tramp settled down to her task. Slowly the other vessel eased the pressure on her dragging anchor and floated farther from danger, to the accompaniment of a mighty cheer from the mass of life-belted passengers clustered about her decks. Gaging the Matilda's strength carefully, Dave signaled below for a shade less steam.

At the end of an hour Sandy appeared,

agitatedly.

"Mon, can ye no gang easier?" he asked, his eyes strained in the direction of the big liner. "Or maybe you could pass a boat back to them for a wee bit coal?"

The skipper smiled.

"Sandy, you're a first-class engineer, I'll tell the world; but you've got no more notion of playin' poker than a silkworm. If we show our cards now, what d'you expect that skipper's going to say? He'd give his ears to compromise with us. Listen, you pin-headed son of Scotland-I've been thinking. We've got to steam somehow for about four hours after the coal I'd burn the cargo in the furnaces, only there isn't anything there that would burn. There's going to be something doing on this old tub. I've sent the mate to get out some axes. I'm going to burn the blame ship itself to keep her going. Start by breaking up all the partitions in the men's quarters. Tear 'em down like as if they hadn't cost money. there's the deck house. Smash it-break it-burn it. Then rip off the doors in the saloon-tables, chairs, everything. Dang me, I'll burn the bridge itself, if necessary, before I'll let that dog-goned sea lawyer go back on his deal because we don't deliver the goods! He's prayin' for the chance, an' all the time I'm thinking of prize Berkshire pigs-dozens of the blamed things, Sandy. I'll confess to you I've never even dared to hope, for years; but now I can see 'em! Sandy, go and smash the Matilda, but if you don't keep that furnace burning I hope you choke!"

To the Scot's mind it was almost irreverence to slash at the tramp's permanent fixtures with axes, and it tortured his soul to see partitions which had cost good money torn down ruthlessly; but he knew that Dave Fenton was right. After the first shock, a fever of destructiveness possessed the engineer. Anything and everything that would burn was fed to the flames until a mighty yelling and hooting from the crippled liner announced the first sight of her sister ship on the horizon.

By that time the Matilda, never a thing of beauty, was a gallant, struggling ruin. Casting a frugal Scot's eye over the damage, Sandy gulped. The fever had passed, and something of the sinfulness of such waste gnawed at the engineer's conscience; but the knowledge that they had made sure of their salvage money—money that was going to keep him and Dave Fenton in comfort for the rest of their days—was a golden, glowing joy.

V

SANDY returned to the engine room and took up his station once more in front of the gages, watching the dwindling steam pressure until the bridge telegraph rang "stop." The old Matilda wouldn't have been able to punch it out for more than another ten minutes.

Peeping from the engine room, Sandy saw the strong liner take hold of her sick sister, saw Dave rowed across. The skipper had gone to ask for something in black and white "in consideration of services rendered."

Then the engineer retired to his own cabin, there to refresh his weary frame with certain bottled goods.

"Losh!" he exclaimed, and half filled a

He was raising the glass to his lips when his eyes fell on the porthole ventilator. There was something caught there. He put the tumbler down with a palsied hand, rose unsteadily, and crossed the cabin. Gingerly he put one arm through his porthole until his fingers had a firm grip on Dave Fenton's scarlet monkey. When he threw it out of the captain's stateroom, it had evidently traveled in mid-air as far as the engineer's porthole and rested there.

"Losh!" muttered Sandy again, his heart contracting at the thought of the narrow margin by which he and his partner had won to success.

He set the carved creature on his bed, stared at it, and scratched his head, with a puzzled face. Then he picked it up again, bore it to the skipper's cabin, and placed it back on its old shelf. Almost he could fancy that the thing winked at him.

It was some time before the Matilda's master returned. The tramp was then nestling by the side of the crippled liner. There was a twinkle in Dave's eye as he came over the side.

"We'll be all right now, Sandy," he said.
"I've got it signed and witnessed, and they're going to pass us all the coal we want. Come down to my cabin, and we'll celebrate with a little something!"

Glasses were filled. Joyously the two sea dogs nodded to one another. Dave sipped his grog, and turned his eyes to the crimson creature on the shelf.

"Sandy, it's a grand world—and that's a grand little ole monkey, isn't it? You'll admit now you're glad we didn't heave it overboard?"

Sandy buried his nose in his glass.

THE LAST RALLY

THERE will come a time, at no distant day, When the dwindling lines of the Blue and Gray Must march to the Silent Land.

No voice of bugle, no loud drumbeat, Can quicken their pulse on square or street When led by the marshal, Death.

The stalwart North and the dauntless South Who battled and bled at the cannon's mouth Have buried their ancient feud.

Thus we should honor them while we may— The thin, wan ranks of the Blue and Gray, Who will meet at the last review.

The Mark Sinister

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF MARY BLAKE, QUEEN OF THE STAGE, AND HER SISTER ANNE

By Lee Thayer

Author of "The Stonehill Mystery," "The Unlatched Door," etc.

XXI

DETER CLANCY found his client comfortably ensconced in a long, swinging couch on a wide porch on the second floor. He looked pale and worn, and appeared nervously exhausted, but his tired eyes lighted a little as the detective came through the bedroom door.

Helena Atterbury tactfully left them alone, and Peter was glad to find that there was little difficulty in convincing Donald Morris that he and his staff were in no way responsible for the newspaper article which had caused so much pain and annoyance.

"I wouldn't have had it leak out for the world," said Donald anxiously. Atterbury was furious about the reporters coming to the house, but I wouldn't have minded that so much. What hurt me was the thought of how it would affect Mary. Somehow, that just bowled me over, Clancy. I'm ashamed to say I went all to pieces. You see, her letter to me-well, I'm sure, no matter what happened, she wanted me to wait-to wait till I heard from her."

"By the way," said Peter, leaning suddenly forward in his low wicker chair, "that letter-have you got it with you, or anywhere handy? I'd like to look at it again. There's something I want to make sure of."

A quality in Peter's voice caused Morris to look up at him quickly.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Have you found out something new? Did you get hold of anything at Hobart Falls yesterday? It seems the most unlikely place in the world, and I haven't the least idea why you went there."

noncommittally. "As I just told your sister, I don't know, any more than I did before, where Miss Blake has gone; but I did come across something - something that may help. Have you the letter?"

Morris, regarding Clancy with serious, puzzled eyes, put his hand into an inner pocket and drew out a leather case. Silently he opened it, extracted a letter, and handed it to Peter, intently watching the face of the young detective.

Peter looked at the letter long and earnestly. He read it through carefully, from the folded page at the beginning to the end. Neither of them spoke. In the silence, a low murmur of voices came up to them from the porch beneath—a question in a servant's controlled tone, and a slightly louder answer from Mrs. Atterbury; but neither of the men heard nor heeded.

Peter folded the letter and handed it back to Donald.

"You'd better keep it," he said slowly.
"I'll ask you for it again, later."

"Very well," said Donald, carefully replacing the letter. "And now, tell me, Clancy, for God's sake, what it was you discovered at Hobart Falls!"

"Well," said Peter deliberately, "it wasn't so much, you may say; but there's one thing I know you will be interested to learn. I have found out, positively, what Miss Blake's own name really is."

"Her own name?" repeated Morris. " And in such an unlikely place?"

"Yes," answered Peter. "It does seem strange, but I can assure you that I'm cor-

rect. Her name is Curwood."
"Curwood!" Donald echoed. Blake, but Curwood!"

"Yes," said Peter. "That's the name. "I did, and I didn't," answered Peter I verified it carefully, and you may be

Copyright, 1923, by Lee Thayer-This story began in the March number of Munsey's Magazine

sure." Suddenly he started violently, and his hand shot up in a warning gesture. He leaned close to Morris, and whispered in

his ear: "What-who is that?"

A voice had come up to them from the porch below. What it said was commonplace to a degree. Donald could see no possible reason for the detective's evident excitement.

"Good morning, Helena, dear," the voice said. "I'm so glad you're here once

more! I only just heard-"

There was the sound of a chair scraping on the tiled floor, and Mrs. Atterbury said something in a cordial tone.

"Who is it?" Peter repeated insistently.

"Who is that down there?"

"Why," said Morris, looking at Peter in astonishment—"why, that must be Aunt Kate. Nobody else has a voice like that." He shook his head with a whimsical half smile. "What in the world—"

"Speak low!" said Peter anxiously. "I

don't want to miss-"

Again the voice came up to them:

"Did Donald come up with you, Helena? I saw that thing in the paper, and some-body told me—"

There followed, in reply, a low murmur

from Mrs. Atterbury.

"Who is it?" Peter asked again, excitement apparent in every line of his face.
"A relative? What is her name—her full name?"

"No, not a relative," Donald answered, bewildered by Peter's obvious agitation. "We've always called her that. Her name

is Rutherford-Kate Rutherford."

"Good God!" said Peter, starting to his feet. "Rutherford!" Under his breath, he whispered to himself: "The voice! The voice over the wire! I'm sure, certain. There can be no mistake. I knew I'd recognize it, if ever—"

"What is the matter, Clancy?" Donald had thrown aside the rug under which he had been lying, and had dropped his feet to the floor. "What do you know of—"

Peter interrupted sharply.

"I want to meet her. I must meet her, Morris! Fix it for me. It's essential that I should meet her at once. There's no time to explain. She may go—oh, for the love of—Mr. Morris, I give you my word that I'm not crazy, but I must see Mrs. Rutherford and talk to her!"

Staggered by the other's impetuosity, Donald got slowly to his feet. "Wait—wait just a moment," he said, passing his hand over his forehead. "I don't understand, but of course—what shall I tell her?"

"Just say you heard her voice and came down to see her," whispered Peter. "Introduce me as a friend—if," he added, with an anxious, questioning look, "if you think you can go that far."

Morris looked him steadily in the eyes. Then he nodded slightly. Placing his hand

on Peter's shoulder, he said:

"I think I can safely go that far, Clancy. Come on!"

Peter felt Morris's weight on his shoulder as they descended the stairs, but by the time they had reached the lower porch he was erect and master of himself.

Mrs. Atterbury started up in surprise, as the two men came through the door, but her brother gave her a warning look, and she subsided into her chair without a word, though her eyes said plainly:

"What in the world is Don bringing that

detective here for?"

He ignored their puzzled question, and advanced, with a smile, to the visitor.

"Good to see you again, Aunt Kate," he said cordially, as her took her hand, and, leaning over, kissed her on the cheek. "It was bully of you to come down so soon."

Peter, who was directly behind him, did not see the visitor until Donald stepped

back and said:

"Will you let me present my friend, Mr. Peter Clancy? Clancy, Mrs. Rutherford."

Then Peter saw, seated in a high-backed Indian chair, as on a throne, a magnificent old lady, whose impressive presence and mien were scarcely affected by the great weight of flesh which seemed to billow all about her.

She spoke to him at once, in a voice deep,

clear, and resonant.

"I'm glad to meet any friend of Donald's," was all she said, but her exquisite enunciation made of the commonplace sen-

tence a thing of beauty.

Morris, observantly following Peter's lead, sat down and joined in the quiet, ordinary, everyday conversation. The weather and everybody's health came in for their stereotyped share. Peter, watching, was quite sure they had interrupted a more intimate talk between the two women. He guessed what its subject had been, but knew that it would not be resumed in the presence of a stranger.

How was he, himself, to get an opportunity for a private conversation with Mrs. Rutherford, the necessity for which was uppermost in his thoughts? And who was she? That she was a personage there could be no doubt. Peter racked his brains to remember if he had ever heard of her, to no purpose. She was of a previous generation, but a personality like that—

Unconsciously, Mrs. Rutherford proceeded to enlighten him. He was so preoccupied that he only caught his own name

in the middle of a sentence.

"And Mr. Clancy, judging by his name and appearance," she was saying, "ought to enjoy the story as much as I did. We're both Irish, aren't we, Mr. Clancy? As you may possibly know, my name was Rohan once upon a time, and—"

Rohan — Kate Rohan! Something clicked in Peter's brain. Who, even of his comparative youth, had not heard of the old Athenæum Company, and of Kate Rohan, its planet among stars? That accounted for much—the gracious presence, the wonderful voice, and many, many things besides, Peter thought.

He almost completely missed the amusing Irish story, told with a delicate, subtle brogue and a perfect inflection, but he heard just enough to join spontaneously in the laugh which irresistibly followed.

At the end of the story, Mrs. Rutherford rose majestically and, like a great ship getting under way, started toward the door.

"I must be going, Helena," she said, holding out her still beautiful hand. "I'm coming to see you and Don very soon again. Take care of yourself, Don, and"—with a little shake of the head as she put her hand in his—"don't worry about things, my dear. There's nothing really worth wasting a lot of expensive worry upon."

"I'll see you to your car, Aunt Kate," said Morris, placing his hand under her

She turned on him at that, and drew

herself up with a little laugh.

"I'd have you know, Donald, that I walked down here and intend to walk back," she said proudly.

"But, Aunt Kate-"

"Yes, my dear. The doctor says that if I don't take some gentle exercise I'll spoil my figure"—she pronounced it "figgah"—" to say nothing of having another heart attack. And he calls walking up the

mountain 'gentle exercise'! To be sure, I take it slowly, but whe-e-ew!"

She drew a long breath and let it go in a tragic sigh, but her eyes were full of an inextinguishable humor.

"Are you going to be long here, Mr. Clancy?" she asked, turning to say good-by to Peter, who stood close beside her.

"I don't quite know," replied Peter.

"It will depend a good deal on circumstances. I ought to go back to town this afternoon, but I haven't been around the—the park much yet, and I promised myself I'd see something of it. You see, Don "—he referred thus familiarly to his host without the flicker of an eyelash—" doesn't feel quite up to going about with me to-day, and—"

Quick as a flash, Donald Morris caught Peter's intention. He did not know what the reason might be, but he grasped the fact that there was some unknown reason for which Clancy wished to see Mrs. Rutherford alone. So completely had the young detective won his confidence that this was

enough for him.

"I do feel a bit seedy, Aunt Kate, and that's a fact," he said promptly; "but Peter's just crazy to stretch those long legs of his. Take pity on him, there's a dear, and let him go along with you." Again he ignored the questioning, perplexed glance of his sister, who stood just behind Mrs. Rutherford. "The road up to Mrs. Rutherford's cottage is the loveliest thing in the park, Peter. When you've seen that, you'll agree with me that it's one of the most paintable bits in America."

"Are you a painter, Mr. Clancy?" Mrs. Rutherford asked a few moments later, as they started up the curving road, Peter accommodating his long stride to her stately, ponderous step. "I should hardly have

thought-"

"I don't look much like one, do I?"
Peter laughed. "Well, I don't consider
myself one, but I'm very fond of nature—
and art. It's one of the chief regrets of my
life, Mrs. Rutherford, that I never saw you
act."

She gave him a quick, almost youthful

glance, and smiled.

"I think you could hardly have been born when I left the stage, Mr. Clancy. That was over thirty years ago."

"But why, Mrs. Rutherford?" exclaimed Peter tragically. "Why did you leave the stage before I was born?" She threw back her white head with a hearty, infectious laugh. Pausing in her slow ascent, she turned to him, making a broad, sweeping gesture with both hands.

"The answer is before you," she said.
"It was this infernal—I may say infernal to you, Mr. Clancy, may I not?—well, then, it was this infernal flesh that came upon me like a thief in the night, and nothing I could do would stop it. I had to give up my career"—there was bitterness in the beautiful voice now—"all on account of—oh, Mr. Clancy, who could stand a fat Portia? Thank God, I had sense enough to stop when I did. At least there are no grotesque memories of Kate Rohan!"

Up to this point in the conversation, they had passed several houses and quite a number of people, to whom Mrs. Rutherford had bowed graciously. Now the road before them lay, for a long way, fairly level and devoid of any sign of life. Unbroken ranks of tall trees threw their leafy shadows across the red shale of the road, and the soft whispering of the wind only served to accentuate the sense of solitude.

In another mood, Peter would have been sensible of the wonderful beauty of the place, but now he saw nothing in it but an opportunity—the opportunity which he must not miss.

Just ahead, in the shadow of a big pine, he saw a low, flat ledge of rock, lichencovered on its face, and strewn above with a generous cushion of soft pine needles.

"You're tired, Mrs. Rutherford," he said gravely. "Let's rest a minute over

She assented with a whimsical nod, and allowed Peter to place her comfortably upon the rock. Peter remained standing just in front of her, and regarded her in silence for a moment. There was a seriousness in his pleasant, homely face that caught her attention.

"What is it, Mr. Clancy?" she asked, with a hint of perplexity in her deep voice. "Why do you look at me as if—why, as if you wanted to ask me a question and didn't quite know what to say?"

"That's just it, Mrs. Rutherford," said Peter eagerly. "That's just my trouble. There's something I want to know—something I must know—"

"And you think I can tell you?" she asked wonderingly.

"I know you can tell me, Mrs. Rutherford—if you will." She gazed up at the detective in sheer bewilderment.

"I can't think what it can be," she said, conscious of the gravity of the young face before her. "I won't promise to answer, but I'm curious to know. Ask your question, Mr. Clancy."

Peter bent his head and said slowly, with pauses between the words:

"Will you tell me, Mrs. Rutherford, why—on Monday, the 29th of this May—from a pay booth in the Vanderbilt Hotel—you called Mary Blake's apartment—and asked to speak to her sister, Anne?"

XXII

A SLOW flush spread over the face of Kate Rutherford, mounting to her snowwhite hair. Her eyes never left Peter's.

"On Monday, the 29th of May, from the Vanderbilt Hotel," she repeated slowly. "Yes, I did call—I did call her apartment, one day, about that time. Well "—a slight pause—"well, what of it? What of it, Mr. Clancy?"

"Don't you know—why, you must know from yesterday's paper, Mrs. Rutherford, that it was on Sunday, the 28th, that Mary Blake disappeared!"

"And you think "—she studied his face intently—" you think I may know where she's gone?"

"It would seem on the cards, perhaps."
"Well, I don't." She threw out her clenched hands, and looked up at him. There was deep concern in her eyes. "I wish to God I did!"

Was she acting, Peter thought? And if so, why?

"How was it that you happened to call her on that particular day, Mrs. Rutherford?" he said. "And why did you cut off so suddenly when..."

"It was you—it was you who answered the call!" she exclaimed, a little light breaking in upon her. "What have you to do with this affair, Mr. Clancy? Why should I answer your questions? I don't

"You're a friend of Donald Morris's an old and intimate friend," said Peter gravely. "You must be affected, deeply affected, I should think, by the sight of his unhappiness."

"Yes," she said at once. "Yes, but I didn't know—I didn't realize completely until this morning." She cast a keen glance at Peter. "Forgive me, Mr. Clancy, but

a

n

I don't see what concern it can be of yours. I know most of Donald's friends, and I

never saw you before."

"Yet I think I can truly say that I am a friend to Donald Morris," said Peter, with evident sincerity. "Aside from that, Mrs. Rutherford, I am a professional detective. I am—"

"Clancy—Peter Clancy!" she exclaimed quickly. "I thought I'd heard that name. Why, you're the man Dick Schuyler told

me about."

Peter nodded.

"Yes, Mrs. Rutherford, and it was Mr. Schuyler who recommended me to Donald Morris. They both trust me, I think I can safely say. Won't you trust me too, Mrs. Rutherford?"

She looked at him for a long time in si-

lence. Then she said:

"Yes, I think so. I think, perhaps, I must. It's a terrible responsibility I have upon me. I didn't realize how serious it was, until to-day; and now I don't know—I can't be sure what I ought to do. Let me see! Ask your questions, Mr. Clancy, and I'll see if I can answer them. What is it you want to know?"

"I've already asked one question that you haven't answered, Mrs. Rutherford," Peter said with a little smile. "Perhaps you don't realize that you haven't."

"No," she said, her straight, black eyebrows drawn together in a thoughtful frown.

"What was the question?"

"I asked you how you happened to call Miss Blake's apartment on the day after

she disappeared?"

"Oh, yes—I remember, you did ask me that. Well "—she spoke slowly—" it was because of a letter I'd just received from her. It had just come in, and I got it at the hotel desk when I turned in my key. I was so worried about it that I went immediately to a booth and called her up."

"Yes, but what was in the letter?" asked Peter eagerly. "Did she say where she

was going, or why?"

"That was what puzzled and worried me," said Mrs. Rutherford, frowning still more. "It was a—a sort of wild letter. I couldn't understand it. She said that she was going away—that she might never come back. It sounded desperate. She thanked me for all I had been to her, and asked me to forgive her—not that I had anything to forgive. The whole thing was my fault, if there was a fault." She paused,

and added: "And that was all, Mr. Clancy. There was nothing else in the letter. I give you my word, that was all."

Disappointment was written large on

Peter's face. He had hoped—

"I thought that possibly she might not have gone," Kate Rutherford went on, "so I called her apartment at once. I wanted to see her—to dissuade her, if possible. Her career—it seemed a shame, a terrible waste. I couldn't understand why, when she had reached the height we all crave, she should—and then I found she wasn't there. There were strangers in the apartment—I couldn't imagine why. I was frightened, and rang off. I knew it would be no use to go down there. She had said definitely, in her letter, that she was going away at once. It was only on a bare chance that I called up—"

" I-see!" said Peter slowly.

He thought in silence for a moment. Then he dropped down upon the rock, bringing his face on a level with the clever, mobile face of old Kate Rohan.

"You said, a few minutes ago"—he hesitated—"I think you admitted, Mrs. Rutherford, that you felt concerned for

Donald Morris."

"Yes," she said quickly. "I had known, of course, that he was interested in Mary Blake. He made no secret of it; but Don has had a great many women friends, and he has the artist's enthusiastic way of speaking of them. Not until I read that article in the paper last night did I realize that this was really serious."

"But you do realize it now?"

"Yes," she replied, sadly. "Yes. Since I have seen him, there can be no doubt. The poor boy!"

"Mrs. Rutherford," Peter said, leaning forward and watching her face, "do you know of a reason why Donald Morris

should not marry Miss Blake?"

There was a long silence. The majestic old lady leaned slightly forward, her tightly clasped hands resting on her ample knees. Her white head was bent, her eyes fixed on the ground. After what seemed to Peter a long time, she said:

" I-I think she would have-must have

felt-that there was a reason."

"And do you feel that it was a reason, Mrs. Rutherford—a sufficient reason?"

"I"—she raised her head, and threw out her hands in an expressive gesture— "I don't know. I don't know how I would have felt, Mr. Clancy. Knowing Donald as I do—no, I don't know how I would have felt." she repeated disconsolately.

"Will you tell me the reason, Mrs. Rutherford?" said Peter, with deep seriousness in his tone. "I know a good deal, but I need to know more. I can't form a definite plan until I'm sure. I've made some guesses—just to-day and yesterday—that have sent me off on a new tack. If what I've suddenly come to believe turns out to be true, I think there's a chance—possibly a remote chance—of finding Miss Blake."

"You think-you think there is?" There was an eager light in the expres-

sive old eves.

"I think there may be," said Peter evasively; "but I can do nothing without your help, Mrs. Rutherford. That's my trouble. I must know the whole story, as I am sure that you, and you only, can tell it. All I am certain of, at the present time, is that Rosamond and Anne Curwood were the twin daughters of a man called Winthrop Curwood, who lived somewhere up in the mountains, between here and Hobart Falls."

"Winthrop Curwood! You know, then, of Winthrop Curwood?" exclaimed Mrs. Rutherford, sitting up straight, and looking

at Peter in surprise.

"I know that he was their father, and

that he was blind," said Peter.

"Yes, blind," sighed Mrs. Rutherford. "Poor Win!"

"You knew him, then?" -said Peter, quick to note the familiar use of the name.

"Oh, yes—I knew Win Curwood well. I knew him very well indeed," said Mrs. Rutherford sadly. "You're too young to remember, but he was leading man at the Athenæum, and I played opposite to him for two seasons."

"Ah, I see!" said Peter. "An actor! That explains—but go on, Mrs. Rutherford. Tell me about him—how he came to be here, in this out-of-the-way part of the country — who he was — everything. He

was an Englishman, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and well known in England. Arthur Quinn saw him play in London, and made him a big offer to come over here. He joined the company while it was still at its best, and he was a great addition to it. He was a wonderful actor, and handsome almost beyond belief. He was younger than I by a number of years, but we soon got to be great friends. I was jealous

of him, of course "—with raised eyebrows and a whimsical smile—" but not so much as I might have been, perhaps. He was very generous and tactful, and after all, at that time, I didn't have much need to fear a rival in popularity."

There was an expression in the great, dark eyes, half of sadness, half of amuse-

ment, at the recollection.

"He was with us only two seasons," she "I remember it was in the continued. middle of the second winter that I began to notice that he wasn't quite himself. He hadn't quite the same certainty of movement, and once, during a performance, when he stumbled against a low table and overturned it, I made sure that he had been drinking. I said nothing at the time, but afterward I spoke to him, and he told me. He was going blind! Think of it, Mr. Clancy! Going blind, with no hope! I don't think he confided in any one but me until the very end. He managed to get through the season. It would have left Arthur Quinn and the company in an awful hole if he hadn't, and with my help-I played up to him and helped him as well as I was able-he saw it through. Then he simply disappeared. He did tell Quinn -the manager, you know-why he would not be able to play again. That was the last any of us ever saw, and the last I heard for a great many years, of Winthrop Curwood."

The deep tones ceased, and Peter saw that there was a mist in the fine old eyes. After a moment, he said gently:

"And then, after many years, you met

Anne Curwood."

She roused herself at that and looked at Peter.

"Yes," she said slowly. "I don't know how you found that out — but it doesn't matter. Yes, I saw Anne Curwood. Curiously enough, too, it was at Helena Atterbury's house that I saw her first."

Peter started in surprise.

"At Mrs. Atterbury's house!" he exclaimed. "Why, then, Morris must have seen her—must have seen Anne Blake!"

Mrs. Rutherford shook her head.

"I don't know whether he ever saw her, or, if he did, whether he noticed her or would have given her a thought if he had. She was doing menial work. Win Curwood's daughter—I can hardly bear to think of it! She was painfully shy and self-conscious—"

"On account of that birthmark," Peter interjected.

Mrs. Rutherford gave him a quick look, but went on at once, as if he had not

e

1

n

t

1

n

"You see, she appeared to be only a servant, after all. She came in to do cleaning by the day. There was a great scarcity of help here that year, and we all had to manage as well as we could. That was how I came to speak with her. I was telling Helena about a lot of trouble I was having with the servants, and she said she thought I might be able to get Anne Curwood for at least one day a week. At the moment I thought nothing of the name, but when I saw her and heard her speakwell, I became interested, and engaged her at once for two days a week. After a time, when she became used to me and my ways. I asked her, point-blank, about her father, and established, to my own satisfaction, that she was really the daughter of my old friend, Win Curwood."

"Did she tell you at that time about her

sister, Rosamond?" asked Peter.

"No-it was later, much later, that I learned about the sister," Mrs. Rutherford answered.

"You found her after you'd taken Anne

to New York as your companion?"

Mrs. Rutherford slowly turned her head, and looked long into Peter's eyes. Peter did a curious thing. They were all alone, in the deep solitude of the leafy woods. There was no one, apparently, within miles of them — certainly no one within earshot; but Peter leaned forward, and with his keen eyes fixed on Kate Rutherford's face he whispered, just above his breath, one sentence—only one, but the effect was electrical.

She started forward and grasped his arm with clutching fingers. Her face was white.

"How-how did you guess?" she asked breathlessly.

XXIII

Donald Morris paced nervously back and forth, back and forth, upon the ground floor veranda of his sister's house. could look out along the road up which Clancy had gone, hours before, with Mrs. Rutherford.

As the slow minutes dragged themselves away, his impatience mounted, but he kept himself in hand. Clancy knew his business, of that he was convinced; but what possible connection it could have with Mrs. Rutherford, he could not guess.

The luncheon hour had come and gone, and it was after three o'clock when Donald, eagerly watching, saw Clancy make the turn which brought him into sight, and saw him coming at a run down the sloping road. He started to meet the detective.

"What has happened, Clancy?" he cried, "Where have you as they came close.

been all this time?"

Peter's face was flushed with hurry and

"I-I can't stop to explain," he panted. "I've only just time to make the train. I must be in New York to-night." caught Donald's arm. "Is there a taxi I can get? The train leaves Tollenville in fifteen minutes, and there's barely time. Oh, Mr. Morris, for the love of God, don't stare at me like that! Tell me how to get a taxi, quick!"

Peter's excitement communicated itself to Morris. He was bewildered, astonished. He longed intensely to ask the questions for which there was no time, but Peter's in-

sistence was overpowering.

"I'll get a car for you here," said Donald, speaking rapidly. "Saunders will make the train at Tollenville if it's a possibility. Your bag's still on the porch. Get

it, while I-"

He dashed across the lawn and disappeared behind the house. In a moment Peter heard the thin buzz of starting batteries, followed instantly by the heavy, rhythmic hum as the engine picked up. In a few seconds more a big car rolled around the corner of the house.

Donald Morris was standing on the running board. He dropped off as the car slowed down, and Peter, bag in hand, nimbly jumped into the seat beside the

chauffeur.

"Give her gas, Saunders!" cried Morris. "You haven't a minute to spare. Goodby, Clancy! For God's sake write or wire me. I-

"I'll let you know! I'll let you know

the minute-

Peter's voice was drowned by the roar of the engine as the car swung away.

Down the broad road and through the park gate the big car honked and whirred. Past picturesque artists' cottages and whitepainted farmhouses it fled, and then with slightly slackened pace it rolled between ugly ranks of boarding houses, down to

the noisy little station, where the train

stood, panting to be gone.

It was already in motion when Peter leaped upon the step, breathless, without a ticket, but thanking his lucky stars that he had been in time.

The train was crowded, and Peter had to wedge himself in beside a fat, jeweled lady, who ate frequently and copiously from greasy paper packages, all the way to the junction; but he did not even notice the discomfort, so occupied was he with his own thoughts.

They were briefly broken in upon when the conductor demanded a ticket; but after Peter had paid for one, and had ascertained that he would have time to send a telegram from the junction, he relapsed again into

depths of intricate speculation.

At the junction, he sent a telegram to O'Malley:

Made peace with D. M. Returning to-night. May have to leave again at once. Will call up if time.—Peter.

He had considered telegraphing Morris from the same place, but had decided

against it.

"I only have a hunch that I know where to look," he thought. "Better not raise hopes till I'm sure. It's a shame to keep him in suspense, but I don't see any other way. No, I'll let it ride as it is for the present."

The afternoon waned, the sun went down in a mass of soft clouds, and night came stealing on. The train was badly lighted, but Peter did not mind. He had no wish to read. He had plenty to occupy his mind, and it did not matter to him that he was not due in New York until after ten o'clock. What he had to do in town would better be done late at night.

"Just so I get there before midnight," thought Peter, glancing absently at his watch. "Nine forty-five. Nine! Why,

we must be-"

He had changed cars at the junction, and had been able to get a window seat. It had become cold and damp after sunset, and he had closed the window. Now he made a shadow, with his hand, upon the glass, and looked out. He could see nothing—not a light, or other sign of human habitation. Suddenly he realized that the train was running very slowly.

"I wonder what the trouble is!" he thought, slightly annoyed at the delay, but

not yet anxious. "Guess I'll see if I can find out."

He stepped cautiously over the feet of an elderly man who was slumbering noisily in the other half of the seat, made his way down the dull and smoky aisle, and gained the platform. Stepping down one step, he clung to the hand rail and leaned far out.

Fog—fog everywhere, thick and gray! The lights from the coaches fell on it as on an opaque veil of floating gauze. Peter, cursing inwardly, went forward into the smoking car. Here he found men hanging out of open windows, looking down the track, and exchanging speculations.

Just then the conductor came through, a

lantern swinging by his side.

"What's up?" said Peter, addressing him anxiously.

"Little foggy," said the conductor, pass-

ing rapidly forward.

"Oh, he won't tell you nothing," said a man in the seat near which Peter was standing. "They're always mum as an oyster when there's any trouble. They say there's a wreck ahead."

"Oh, my God!" ejaculated Peter, in a tone which was half profanity, half prayer.

He looked again at his watch. They were due in five minutes now, but were still, obviously, far from their destination.

"The doors will be closed at twelve o'clock," thought Peter. "If I'm too late--"

Just then the train came to a grinding stop.

Peter hurried to the door and down the steps. He paused on the bottom one, and, hanging on to the hand rail, swung out so that he could see down the line.

Ahead of the engine, a red lantern bobbed along beside the track, close to the ground. Still farther ahead another red light, apparently suspended in mid-air, winked through the mist. He could hear raised voices in the smoking car behind him, and several men came out on the platform, talking excitedly.

Minutes passed, and then, to Peter's infinite satisfaction, the light against the foggy sky changed from red to green.

"Thank God!" said Peter, as, with the successive jerk of couplings, the train moved slowly ahead.

Peter regained his seat in an anxious frame of mind. He had reached a point in his intricate problem where his impatient spirit could brook no further delay. The train did not again come to a complete standstill, but its progress through the fog was agonizingly slow. Many times he looked at his watch, many times he shaded the glass of the window to peer outside. The fog had changed to heavy mist, and it became more and more difficult to form any idea as to where they were.

y

t.

1

n

r,

e

g

e

a

g

3-

IS

n

y

n

ie

d

d

t-

1-

ne

1e

in

18

Then, when it seemed as if time had ceased, and that a lost train was wandering wearily through the fogs of the ages, a big arc light flashed through the window—then another, and another. Lighted windows were all about. The train roared and rumbled through a tunnel, and Peter, with a sigh of relief, realized that he was near

his journey's end.

He was the first person to alight from the train, when it clanked and hissed into the station. He stood on the forward deck of the ferryboat, and impatiently watched the slowly nearing lights of the great, dim city, wherein all his hopes were centered. He was the first passenger to reach its

streets, and in a moment he was whirling through them as fast as the traffic laws per-

He dismissed his cab at a dark corner of Washington Square, and once more, a little before midnight, in a dripping mist, he crept along the south side of Waverly

His soft whistle, twice repeated, brought the faithful Rawlins from the shelter of a doorway.

"Is it yourself back again so soon, Mr. Clancy?" Rawlins asked superfluously. "And have you come to tell me that I can go home and to bed this cheerful night, please God?"

Peter ignored the question.

mit, and perhaps faster.

"I'm in a hurry, Rawlins," he said quickly. "Is the coast clear? I want to go up to the apartment again."

"You can chase yourself right along, then," Rawlins told him. "I seen the dago go out half an hour ago, and he hasn't come back yet. If you hustle—"

Peter did not wait to hear more. He slipped across through the mist and up the worn, brown steps. He found the vestibule door open. The inner door was closed, but not locked. He was in time!

Softly, soundlessly, he ascended the dark stairs—one flight, two flights, three. Again he inserted his duplicate key in the lock, as he had two nights before — only two nights, but what a difference there was in the feeling with which he listened to the soft click of the lock as the bolt threw back! Then it had been a forlorn hope; now—

He closed the door softly, and went without hesitation into the living room, in the front, setting down his hand bag just inside the door. Again he pulled down the shades before the three big windows, but this time there was no uncertainty in the movements which followed.

Flash light in hand, he went quickly over to the desk, and turned on the small electric lamp that stood on it. Then, slipping the flash into his pocket, he crossed the room, and took down with care the pile of magazines which were in the corner of the top bookshelf.

He carried them over to the desk, and there, in the light of the candle lamp, went through them, one by one. The pages passed swiftly through his fingers with a soft, fluttering noise, which sounded loud in the stillness, but Peter did not hear it, so intent was he upon his odd quest.

He looked like a student, as he sat there at midnight, with bent head, poring over the pile of magazines, but he read nothing. His swift fingers turned the pages, one by one, without pause, until he came to a place where an article had been cut away. Then he stopped, drew out a little leather book from his pocket, and made an entry—the name and date of the magazine, and the number of the page. He did this with each magazine in turn, working methodically down through the pile until all had been examined.

"I may be a fool," he said to himself, with a tired sigh, as he rose from his cramped position, and, lifting the mass of magazines, replaced them on the shelf. "If I am, I am-that's all; but it's a bet, Even that wise old a good bet, Peter! Mrs. Rutherford thought so; and we're not passing any of 'em up. Now, let's see. There's one thing more—may not be any use, but it's better to get the whole dope, now I'm on the spot. It was the Planet-I remember that, and the date was-no, I'm not exactly sure—the 24th or the 25th -and I've no idea what page. Better make sure!"

Peter never knew exactly why he turned out the light in the living room just then. Some habitual instinct of caution, perhaps. At any rate, he did turn it out, and guided his steps by his flash light only, as he made his way down the long, narrow hall to the storeroom.

Here he proceeded again, swiftly, unhesitatingly. He lit the gas, and dropped to his knees beside the big trunk. There was a faint jingle as he selected a key from the big bunch which he took from his pocket, and inserted it in the lock. A click followed, as the bolt was released. There was not a sound when he carefully raised the lid, and folded back the garments on top, until he came to a bundle wrapped in newspaper.

This he lifted out and looked again at

the wrapping.

"The Planet of May 25th, and the page -the fourth page," he muttered. "This probably has nothing to do with the case. There'd be likely to be a notice of the closing of 'Dark Roads' that she'd have wanted to keep. Anyway, now I've got the whole bag of tricks-and that's all I can do to-night, thank Heaven! Gee, but I'm tired!"

He pushed his hand up through his hair, tilting his hat, which he had not removed, to an acute angle, and again he said, with

"Thank Heaven, I'm through!"

Then he replaced the package and closed and locked the trunk. He had just turned the key, and was still upon his knees, when his whole body suddenly stiffened. With a spring he was upon his feet, and with one swift, soundless motion he had turned out the light. Then he waited, every muscle tense, listening.

In the solid darkness, far away at the other end of the hall, he heard the unmistakable sound of a key cautiously turned

in a lock.

XXIV

THERE was silence, absolute silence, and impenetrable. Peter waited, breathless, listening, the one available sense sharpened to preternatural acuteness.

Then, faintly, faintly, he heard the outer door move on its hinges, heard a tiny click as it closed again, was aware of a little gleam of light stealing along the floor, and of stealthy footsteps coming nearer and nearer, as the light perceptibly increased.

Inch by inch, without a sound, Peter crept behind the storeroom door. His right hand closed firmly on the edge and he drew it toward him, widening the crack between the door and the jamb sufficiently to be able to see the midnight intruder, if heor she-came so far along the hall.

Softly the cautious footsteps continued their advance. The light was a distinct ray now, and Peter drew back into the shadow, keeping his eyes in a line with the narrow aperture. Then the light became a small, blinding circle, and as it flashed away, Peter caught a dim glimpse of the figure behind it. The light reflected from the wall brought out the whites of the eyes, and, less distinctly, the features of the

Peter gave a little inward gasp of satisfaction. His right hand slipped swiftly back, and when he brought it forward again it was not empty. Silent and quick as a cat, he slipped around the edge of the door. Three long, noiseless steps, a ring of cold steel pressed against a sweating neck, and-

" Hands up, Angelo!"

The voice was low and stern, filled with icv menace.

There followed a crash and a sobbing Two trembling hands shot up into the air and remained there, rigid, protesting mutely against any need for violence.

"Keep 'em up, and turn around!" said Peter in a fierce whisper, pulling out his own strong flash light to take the place of Angelo's little cheap one, which had fallen to the floor. "So it was you-you, all the time, Angelo! I might have known. An inside job-yes, it was an inside job, all right! I knew that from the start, and I've had you watched all along; and now I've caught you!"

The little Italian shook and shivered, blinking in the blinding light, glancing fearfully from Peter's face to the blue-black instrument of death which pointed so unerringly at his pounding heart.

" Don' shoot! Don' shoot, boss," he pleaded in a sobbing whisper. "Me do noding-noding only justa lika you say! Oh, Santa Maria degli angeli, put up dat damma gun!"

Still fixing the trembling wretch with menacing eyes, Peter slowly dropped his hand and slipped his small automatic into

the side pocket of his coat.

"I'll shoot you through my pocket if you make a move, Angelo," he hissed.
"And I'd rather do it than not, see! Make no mistake about that. Now, come with me," and he seized the janitor roughly by the wrist.

"Ug-g-gh!" Angelo cringed, and caught Peter's grasping hand with his left. " Taka hol' furder up," he begged. "Gotta da sore arm, me—ver' bad!"

d

d

e

n

y n a c. d

h

d

f

n

1

d

S

Peter loosened his fingers just enough to disclose a long, scarcely healed cut across the inner side of the Italian's wrist. He looked sharply at it and at Angelo, then shifted his hold higher on the forearm.

"I don't know why you think I ought to be tender of your feelings, you scoundrel!" he said gruffly. "Come in where we can get a light. I want to have a heart to heart talk with you, you lying, thieving, murdering—hell, what's that?"
As he turned, Peter's foot struck against

something which lay upon the floor.
"Datta da silv'!" Angelo wailed softly. "Come putta him back-me."

"Pick it up and bring it in here," ordered Peter sternly. "And don't try any tricks, I warn you!"

Obediently the Italian stooped, and, picking up a rather large package, roughly wrapped in newspapers, preceded Peter to the dining room, where the detective swiftly lit the gas.

"Now," said Peter, "you sit there, and keep your hands above the table."

He drew up a chair on the opposite side, and ostentatiously laid his automatic close beside him upon the dusty mahogany.

"Now, Angelo," he said grimly, "you're going to tell me how you killed Miss Mary Blake."

" Ah, Gesù, Maria!" cried the little Italian, in agony, lifting his trembling, shaking hands in the air, and looking at Peter with staring, panic-stricken eyes. "Me no killa! Mees Mary, she go 'way—sist' go 'way! Nobod' here—nobod'! Me no killa nobod', no time!"

Peter's eyes narrowed as he looked fixedly at the man's face.

"Did she tell you she was going away? Miss Mary, did she tell you?" he asked earnestly.

Angelo nodded quickly, and then shook his head.

"What does that mean?" asked Peter angrily. "Yes or no? You're a liar anyway, Angelo. You said you thought the ladies were still here. Now which is ityes or no?"

" No, no! Mees Mary' sist', she tella me-Mees Anne!"

"And what did she tell you? Think carefully, Angelo. Your life depends on

what you say now. You've got to convince me that you didn't murder one or both of them. I can send you to the chair, if you don't. Take your time, but tell me exactly what Miss Anne said."

The little Italian, thus tenderly admonished, was a pitiful sight to see. His brown face was a sickly color, like cocoa with too much milk in it. His forehead was covered with beads of perspiration, to which his dark hair clung when he removed the shaking hand which had been pressed against it. His heart seemed to have risen into his throat, for he gulped once or twice, spasmodically, before he began his almost incoherent confession.

"Tella you da trut' now, boss, by alla da saint an' angel!" He crossed himself fervently, and raised his tense hand high in the air. "Tella da trut' now, sure! Tella da lie once, me-but no any more. Dis da trut'-si, si!"

He dropped his hand. Peter leaned forward, fixing him with unwinking eyes.

"All right!" said Peter. "But vou've got to make good this time, understand? Come across with it. What did Miss Anne say, and when was it?"

"On Sunday morn', early, ver' early, Mees Anne, she come down w'en me wash vestabula. She say, 'Angelo, my sist' she go 'way las' night. Me go to-day. May stay longa time. Da rent he is pay t'ree mont'. Me fixa ev't'ing. No needa you go inna da flat. Ev't'ing alla right.' " He threw his hands out, palms upward. "An' dat alla she say; but she no leava da house till five in da eve'. See her in tax' wit' bigga da tronk. She go herself, an' sist' she go night before. Me no killa no one, me! No, no! Believe me-no! Madredi Dio, boss, me tella da trut'!"

"That sounds all right, Angelo. You say it easy," said Peter, still glowering; "but I've only your word for it. How about all that blood we found spilled around the apartment, and that big spot on Miss Mary's scarf? How can you account for-"

"Signore! Boss! Listen!" broke in the excited Italian. Jumping up from his chair, he supported his trembling body with one hand, pressed flat down upon the table, while with the other he gesticulated wildly. "Me tella you 'bout alla blood, how he come. He was alla from dis, from dis!" He raised his right hand, and with the left struck the wounded wrist rapidly, many

times. "He cutta himself on wind' in kitch'."

"On the window in the kitchen? That's a likely story!" said Peter, in apparent disgust. "Why, that was a month ago, Angelo. It would have healed twice over in that time, if—"

"No, no!" Angelo interrupted passionately. "He not come well. He stay sick—all swella up. He hurta lika hell. I t'ink he punishmen'—si, si!"

"Punishment for what, Angelo? If you didn't murder Miss Blake, what was there to be punished for?"

"No, no!" Angelo reiterated the agitated disclaimer. "No murd'! No murd'! Me tella da trut'!"

"You said that before," said Peter

sternly.

"Ye-ah, ye-ah! Alla right! Now I tella. See, boss—listen! Me gotta sick wife—Maria. Si, si. She ver', ver' sick, longa time. Doc' say she mus' go countree. Me no gotta da mon'. How me getta da mon'? Night before Mees Anne an' Mees Mary go 'way, me hava da dream—longa dream." His voice dropped, and his eyes were wide. "All inna da dream, me see number—7741. Jus' lika dat—7741. In da morn', me tella Maria. She say mus' be number for lot'—"

"Lot?" asked Peter, frowning, and then, a light breaking: "Lottery — you mean

lottery?"

"Si, si, si!" Many nods. "Si, lot'! Me t'ink lika Maria, ye-ah, me t'ink lucky number! But "—a shrug—" no gotta da mon'. Den, alla same day, dat ver' same Sunday—Mees Anne, she go 'way. Mees Anne gone—sist' gone. Me t'ink—lil dev' whisp'—me bor' some lil t'ing—no steala, bor', see? I can—what you say?—pawna da silv', da ringa, da necklace, da pin—an' bringa back w'en lucky number come, an' I maka some mon', see?"

" I see what you want me to think," said

Peter gruffly. "Go on!"

"So me come up here—late. Alla dark, but me hava da lil flasha light, see? Come in—looka all 'roun'—in desk, in draw', alla place. Noding—no ringa, no necklace, no pin. Come outa here—fin' silv', lotta silv' in draw' an' onna da top. Me maka him in bund', queek! Me getta him all read'. Den, presto, I t'ink—Mees Blake, she come back—maybe somebod' come before da lot' is draw—who gotta da key but Angelo? Den gotta fright', me, boss. Gotta ver'

bada fright'. T'ink, queek-me fixa so dey t'ink t'ief, he come fire 'scape. Sure! Si, si! Go in kitch'—me slip queek over by wind'. Den! S-s-h! Me hear biga, longa ringa, downstair' on bell. Me stop-listen -know I mus' go down, queek. Hava da big bun' of silv' onna da arm! What I do? All afraid dey catch Angelo! Mus' fixa so dey t'ink t'ief come from da outside, see? Queek, queek-me smasha da wind', right by da lock. Diavolo, feel cutta on da wris', Grab him queek-go run inna da hall. Me know he isa blood, so pull outa da bandan' -he red, so no can see da blood. Wind him roun' tight. All I do, fas,' fas'-alla tima da bell ring. I know it is da groun' floor. Dat lady, she alla time forgetta da key-so I run down queek, an' leava da bun' in dark onna da stair. I go open da door. It is da groun' floor, lika I know. T'inka me alla right now. Santa Maria!"

It was a bitter wail. Overcome by a succession of troubles, the poor wretch laid his head down on the table and sobbed.

The grim austerity of Peter's face sof-

tened a little.

"And what is this, Angelo?" he asked, touching the newspaper-wrapped package which was lying beside him on the table.

"Da silv', da silv'!" moaned Angelo, without raising his head. "Me tella you,

it was da silv'."

Peter drew the package toward him, and pulled off the string which held it fast, disclosing a number of pieces of flat silver and a small coffee service.

"Is it all here?" asked Peter quietly.
The rough head upon the table moved

up and down in assent.

"But how did you get it back?" Peter's voice had taken a new tone. "I thought you lost out when the lottery was drawn."

Angelo was too far gone to notice this

evidence of Peter's omniscience.

"Playa da same number twice—two day," muttered Angelo. "Firs' day, lose; secon' day, he come alla right, lika dream."

"And as soon as you won, you took the silver out of hock and brought it back?"

Again the silent nod.

Peter sat back in his chair, and looked for a long time at the rough, bowed head. At last he spoke, and in his voice was a half quizzical kindliness.

"You're a great rascal, Angelo, and a stupid fool to boot. You've made me a lot of trouble; but I believe you've told me the truth at last."

Angelo raised his stricken head. A gleam of something like hope shone in his eyes.

"Yes," Peter went on, "I believe you've told me the truth, and I will say it's helped to clear things up. But now, listen! One thing more—how did Miss Blake's scarf come to be stained with blood, and how did it happen to be just where we found it?"

Peter was thinking aloud more than he

was addressing Angelo.

y

ga

en

la

50

SO

9

ht

33.

1e

'n

nd

la

'n

la

la

la

N.

id

f-

đ,

0,

d

d

d

ıt

0

e

"It fell down behind the trunk, and nobody noticed it. The cabman pulled it along the hall when it caught on the bottom of the trunk, and he shook, or kicked it loose, just at the hall door. Later, that same night, you chanced to walk over it, and it must have caught—perhaps on your shoe. That sort of soft, fringy thing would catch on almost anything. You dragged it across the sill, and when the door shut, it held the scarf fast. But the blood on it? If you bound up your wrist, I don't quite see—"

"Si, si!" cried Angelo. "But looka, looka, boss. Listen! Me fixa da bandan' 'roun' him, so, an' hol' him fas'; but w'en I comma to da door, mus' use bot' han', see?" He made the motion of turning two knobs at once, and Peter remembered that it was necessary to do this in order to open the hall door. "I mus' let him go, an' da blood, he jumpa out an' fall onna da door. You showa me da place, boss! You no rememb'?"

"And it fell on the scarf just below," Peter said slowly. "Yes, I see. I guess that's right, Angelo. I guess that explains—well, and that's that," he added, rising to his feet. "Put the silver back where you found it, Angelo. So—that the way it was? All right! Now "—he laid his hand heavily on the Italian's shoulder—"come

with me."

Angelo drew a deep sigh, and slowly twisted his head to look up into Peter's face. What he saw there caused him to start, to cry out, and then, with head bent before the array of silver that he had been honest enough to redeem, to sob out his heart in a long string of thankful, reverent profanity.

XXV

THE doors of the stately classic façade of the New York Public Library were scarcely opened, on the following day, when a young man with eager Irish blue eyes and very red hair might have been seen—and

probably was seen, at least by the doorkeeper—making his way toward the periodical room.

Probably, too, he was remembered for some little time by the young librarian in charge of the magazines, for not only was he of exceptionally pleasant address, but his wants, though definite, were astonish-

ingly varied.

He spent some time in going over the magazines which were brought to him, and made several notes in a small, well worn leather book. Once, when he referred back to places he had marked with cards in two previously examined periodicals, and compared them with the one in his hand, there was a gleam of satisfaction—triumph, perhaps—in his eye.

At last he rose, and, passing into the newspaper department, consulted a file of the New York *Planet* for May. After that, he left the library and proceeded, as rapidly as possible, to a small office building near Broadway, where the sign "Clancy & O'Malley" was modestly displayed on a small bronze plate attached to the side post

of the entrance.

"Well, O'Malley," said Peter, plunging into his partner's private office, "I've had

one hell of a time!"

"That so?" said the old man, looking up with a hearty welcoming glance into the face of his young colleague. "I got your wire, Pete. Glad you fixed it up with Morris. Sit down, lad, and tell me all about it."

"Gee, O'Malley, I'd like to," said Peter wearily; "but I can't tell yet whether I'll have the time. Oh, there you are, Jack!" he broke off, as a boy came into the room with several time-tables in his hand. "That's quick work, son. Now, let's see—"

He dropped down upon a chair beside the desk, picked up the time-table of a Western railroad, and ran his eye over it at a rapid rate.

"Are you off again, Pete?" asked O'Malley anxiously. "You look pretty well done up, boy. I know your wire said that you

might have to-"

"Yes, and it spoke the truth," Peter hurriedly replied. "I've got to get the next train for Chicago, that will connect with one going down to Cordenham. Cordenham!" he repeated, running his finger down a column of names. "Here we are—Cordenham."

"For the love of Mike, Peter," said O'Malley, "what the devil, and where the

devil, is Cordenham?"

"I don't know yet what the devil it may turn out to be," said Peter, still intent on the time-table; "but Cordenham is a little place somewhere south of Chicago—and it's destined to be famous one of these days, if what I've learned this morning turns out to be true. You can take it from me. Oh—leave Chicago "—he was reading from the time-table—"leave Chicago one twenty-six, arrive Cordenham four seventeen. That can't be right—nearly three hours! Yes, it is. Leave Chicago one twenty-six, arrive Cordenham four seventeen. Must be a rotten little road! I say, O'Malley, how would you rather go to Chicago?"

"In a coffin," promptly replied the confirmed and prejudiced New Yorker.

Peter chuckled.

"No, but I mean it, O'Malley. Which is the best train?"

"The one that takes longest to go, and the one that's quickest coming back," an-

swered O'Malley.

Peter was forced to decide from his own more limited experience. He chose a train which left the Pennsylvania Station at eleven o'clock, and reached Chicago at nine on the following morning. This would give him ample leeway, in case the Western train was late, to make the connection for Cordenham. After his last night's experience, he wished to run no risk.

When he had made his decision, he threw the time-tables down on the desk and

turned to his partner.

"I only have a little time, O'Malley," he said; "but I want to put you wise to something I turned up last night. It was a peach of a piece of luck, and explains a lot, as you'll see for yourself."

And he proceeded rapidly to relate the story of his capture of Angelo in Miss

Blake's apartment.

"I put the screws on him, after I'd caught him," Peter said. "You may be sure of that, O'Malley. I made him believe that I thought he'd murdered one or both of the sisters—"

"But you couldn't have thought that,

Peter!" interrupted O'Malley.

"No, of course not," answered Peter readily. "I sized the situation up pretty well, from the minute he told me there was silver in the bundle he was carrying; but

I wanted to get the dope straight, and the best way, of course, was to scare him into it, poor devil!"

Then he went on to tell of Angelo's

confession.

"I let him off easy," he said, in conclusion. "What else could I do, O'Malley? What if either of us had a wife who was desperately ill, and we needed the money for her? Well, all I said to him was, 'It's a poor bet, Angelo. Nobody gets away with it for long. Promise me you'll never try it on again;' and he promised by all the saints in the calendar."

O'Malley was silent for a moment when Peter had finished. Then he said:

"So our murder theory's knocked into a cocked hat! At least, it seems that way to

me, Pete. Doesn't it to you?"

"Well," said Peter, eying his partner meditatively, "you mustn't forget that the only person seen to leave the apartment took with her a big trunk; that the large sum on deposit at the bank could be drawn out by Anne Blake as well as by Mary; that, apparently, only Anne's clothes are gone—oh, and all the rest of it. We've only solved the one problem, so far—that is, as to why there was blood in several places in the apartment, and why the rooms were all upset."

"Do you believe Angelo's story, Pete?"

asked O'Malley.

"I do." The answer was sharp and to the point. "I think even an old hand like you, O'Malley, would have been convinced. I think you may take it for granted that the only blood spilled was Angelo's. Now, where do you go from there?"

"Are you kidding me, Pete?" asked O'Malley, with a little twinkle in his sharp old eyes. "Are you trying to draw me, so as to get the laugh on the old man? Have you got something new, boy? You have—I can see it in your eye! What is it, Pete?

t

S

a

lo

an

01

fe

bi

tw

What-"

"Oh, Lord!" After a hasty glance at his watch, Peter had jumped to his feet. "I've got to clear out this minute, O'Malley," he said. "I've just time to get my ticket and catch the train. Send up a prayer that I'll get a night's rest on the train, if you think you have any pull up above, for I need it, old top! Yes, I was kidding you." He laid his hand on the old man's broad shoulder. "I've got something, and I think it's good, but I can't tell you till I'm sure. It may be a pipe dream,

after all. Anyway, I can't stop now. Good-by, old scout. Wish me luck!"

"Good-by and good luck, Pete," said O'Malley gravely, as their hands met in a hearty clasp. "I'll be thinking about you, boy. Good-by!"

He turned back when Peter, in his tu-

multuous exit, slammed the door.

"Youth," the old detective said, shaking his gray head. "Youth and courage—and brains—brains!"

XXVI

A DAY and a night and almost another day passed uneventfully for Captain O'Malley. For Peter the time was marked only by the click and rumble of swiftly moving wheels, and then on again, more slowly and with lessened comfort, in the dingy plush-covered seat of a day coach, counting the little stations as they passed—until at last he reached Cordenham.

At the tiny way station he alighted from the train and proceeded to make the neces-

sary inquiries.

"Oh, yes—you can find it easy enough," said the old expressman in answer to Peter's question—eying him a trifle curiously, Peter thought. "It's about half a mile down the road. You'll know it by the high wall all round the place. The old Mayhew place, we calls it. It was a crank of an Englishman that built it. He died a spell ago. You'll know it by the stone wall. You can't miss it. It's only about half a mile, and ask for the Mayhew place. Anybody can tell you."

With these explicit directions, Peter set off down the flat and lonely road. The day had been hot and breathless, but now, in the early evening, a cooling breeze was springing up, rippling the fields of standing grain, and rustling in the trees along the dusty road. Peter bared his head to the refreshing air, and strode forward with

swift and determined steps.

He passed few houses along the way, and fewer people. One of these, a bright-looking boy in torn overalls, he stopped and asked if he was on the right road to the Mayhew place. The answer was a nod and a pointing finger, and the boy passed on, kicking up the soft dust with his bare feet.

Just after this, Peter crossed a wooden bridge over a thread of water running between wide, eroded banks, and came to a small, dark wood. The wood passed, he came suddenly upon a long stretch of high stone wall, which seemed incongruous in

such a setting.

Behind the wall, at some little distance, he could see the top of an old stone house, which appeared more incongruous still, for it was on the lines of a medieval English castle, with high, crenelated walls. On the top of the roof, most incongruous of all, was a modern superstructure, largely of glass. As Peter looked, a strange, brilliant light of a queer, bluish purple flared out through the windows — died down—flared once again—and was gone.

Peter muttered something to himself, and went on along the wall, stepping quietly on the close-trimmed grass which lay between it and the road. Soon he came to a closed gate—a high gate of heavy ironwork. He paused here only long enough to look down a well kept driveway, shaded with dark trees and thickly planted with shrubbery. There was not a soul in sight. Then he continued on about five hundred feet to the visible end of the wall.

He had hoped that the wall had simply been built to insure privacy from the road, as is the case in some country homes; but he found, to his disappointment, that the tall stone structure continued, turning off at right angles, and probably inclosing the

entire estate.

Peter was rather at a loss how to proceed. He had wished, if possible, to make sure of one point before coming out into the open, and the height of the wall bade fair to defeat even the possibility of ac-

complishing his purpose.

He stood for a moment at the corner, thinking how best to proceed. As he glanced about him, he noticed a rough but well worn path, leading away from the road, and closely following the turn of the wall through a wood of good-sized trees and thick underbrush.

"I'll take a chance," thought Peter, and

quietly entered the path.

He had walked far enough to be certain that he had passed the house, though he could not see it, when suddenly he came to a stop. On the other side of the wall he could hear voices. Two women's voices he made them out to be, though he could not hear the words. It was the first sign of life that he had discovered around the odd, lonely place.

"I will have a look in!" he thought

determinedly.

Glancing swiftly about, he saw a tree, tall enough and near enough to the wall for his purpose.

Quick and light as a panther, he was up among the leafy branches in a second. He had chosen well; for below him, clear to view, were the lawns and the garden of the

queer old house.

Just beneath, to the left of the tree he had chosen, were the two women whose voices he had heard. One was dressed in the crisp white of a nurse. The other Peter could not see well, for she was in a wheel chair, the back of which was toward the wall. He could hear the voices a little more distinctly now, though the words were still indistinguishable. The nurse's voice had a cheerful professional ring; the other spoke in a high, thin, society drawl. Both voices dimmed as the women moved slowly away, across the lawn.

"Nothing doing!" thought Peter to

himself.

Immediately losing interest in the couple who had been so near him, his quick eyes

roamed farther afield.

On the lawns and about the garden, gay with flowers, several other figures moved. They were mostly in couples—a nurse, and with her another woman. Some were walking about and some were being wheeled in chairs.

At a little distance from the rest, one woman walked alone—a slender figure dressed in black. She walked swiftly, with long, even, purposeful steps. She was opposite the house and moving away from

Peter when he first saw her.

The instant he caught sight of her, there was no one else in all the grounds for Peter. His eyes followed her every movement. She reached the shrubbery which closed the view on the opposite side of the lawn. Peter held his breath. Would she enter the shrubbery and disappear from sight? No—she had turned, and was coming slowly toward him.

When the dark figure again reached the house, Peter had another bad moment, but, without pause, like one who paces a deck for exercise, the woman rapidly advanced. Nearer and nearer she came. Now she skirted the end of a flower bed and was on the lawn, just beneath Peter's tree.

In his excitement, Peter's foot slipped a little, and a small dead branch broke with a sharp snap. The woman looked up, and Peter knew — knew without shadow of

doubt—that he was looking into the face of the woman whom he had so long and so earnestly sought—the woman who called herself Anne Blake.

XXVII

THE hours that followed Peter's abrupt and unexpected departure from Fennimore Park passed slowly and heavily for Donald Morris. He waited for nearly twenty-four hours, hoping to get a wire. All the while, though he was physically better for the change of air and scene, his mind chafed at his distance from the scene of action.

Soon after Peter had gone, Morris had motored up the hill to Mrs. Rutherford's cottage, only to be told that she was suffering from a bad headache, and had gone to bed. In the morning he had called her up on the telephone, to inquire as to her health, and to ask if he might see her; but he found, to his great surprise, that she had gone to town on the early train.

Disappointed and anxious, he felt that he could stand it no longer. His momentary collapse, of which his sister had taken advantage to get him away from town for a time, was practically over. He felt considerably better, but the uncertainty and inaction, combined with Peter's odd behavior and Mrs. Rutherford's sudden return to New York, made him feel that he must follow them.

He had no means of knowing that Clancy was not in New York. He hoped to see the detective, not later than that evening, for he had determined to take the noon

train from Tollenville.

"I'll be just as comfortable at home as I am here, Helena," he said, when she remonstrated with him. "I've telephoned to have Frederick's private car put on the noon train. What's the use of having a kind brother-in-law who owns a railroad, if we can't take advantage of it? I'm taking Hobbs back with me, and he'll look out for me as well as you could. Don't worry, dear. I'll be much better off at home."

He kissed her gently, and went out to the car which was already waiting to take

him to the train.

On the evening of the day, then, when Peter arrived at Cordenham, but at a somewhat later hour, Donald Morris reached New York. Late as it was, his first action on arriving was to call Peter's office on the telephone, and he was lucky enough to find O'Malley still there.

The old man told him briefly of Peter's sudden departure from the city, and added:

"He was in a devil of a rush, and I don't know what he's up to, Mr. Morris; but he did give me some information which I think would interest you. I've got to go out just now, but I'll be back here by eight o'clock. I have a lot of work I must make up. If you could find it convenient to come over after dinner - or I'll come to your house-"

"No, no-I'll come over to your office," said Morris hastily. "I can do so perfectly well, and I think I'd rather be there than anywhere else. Clancy probably thinks I'm still at Fennimore Park, and you'll be likely to get any news there is before I would. I'll come over a little after eight o'clock. It's very good of you to take the

time."

"Not at all, not at all," said O'Mallev cordially. "Wish I had some real good news for you-not that this isn't good, as

far as it goes."

Compliant to this conversation, therefore, Donald made ready to leave his sister's house in Gramercy Park a little before eight that evening. Somewhat encouraged by O'Malley's cheerful tone, and by the fact that news-good news as far as it went -awaited him, he had dined with more appetite than he had known for several days. As the hands of the tall clock in the hall marked the hour of seven forty-five, having noted from his window that the taxi he had summoned to take him to O'Malley's office was already drawn up at the curb, he descended the stairs from his room, expecting to leave the house at once.

He had seen the cabman run up the steps, and, after a short colloquy with some one at the door, return to his cab. He was surprised, therefore, as he passed his sister's apartments on the second floor, to hear the sound of voices in the hall below. Since he had dismissed his valet for the night, he knew that, besides himself, there was no one in the house except an old colored woman who had been in the family for two generations, and who always took charge of the house when the family was

away for the summer.

Fearing that it might be some casual friend who would detain him, Donald waited out of sight in the upper hall, until he could determine who the unexpected caller might be. As he paused to listen, he heard Susan's soft, old voice.

"I don' think you can see Mistah Morris to-night," it said. "He jus' goin' out."

"But I must see him!" It was a woman's voice, sharp, thin, and nasal. "He'll want to see me when he knows who I come from. You tell him, and tell him quick, there's a lady here waiting to see him that can tell him something he wants most particular to know. Tell him I seen the piece in the paper Monday, and I know where the lady is. You tell him that, and—"
"It's all right, Susan," cried Donald,

running swiftly down the stairs. "I'll see her. Just go out and tell the cab to wait.

please.

As Susan quietly disappeared, he spoke

quickly, breathlessly, to the other woman. "Come in here," he said, leading the way into a small reception room at the right of the hall, and switching on the lights as he entered.

The woman followed obediently. She was a large, stout, middle-aged person, dressed elaborately in a cheap imitation of There were many gaudy the latest mode. rings upon her ungloved hands, and in her ears were earrings of such size and weight as to make one fear for her equilibrium should she lose one of them. Her face, which must once have been handsome in a common way, was slack-skinned, puffy, and covered heavily with powder and rouge. As she walked, her fluttering, scanty garments exhaled a heavy perfume.

Donald was too much excited to be seriously affected by her unprepossessing

appearance.

"Please sit down," he said quickly, " and

tell me what you have to say."

She sank luxuriously into a softly cushioned chair, and with a keen, observant eye took in her surroundings and the appearance of the man who remained standing before her.

"You're Mr. Morris-Mr. Donald Morris?" she asked, looking sharply up at him. "Yes? Well, then, I'll tell you-and if

there's anything in it-"

"There'll be something in it for you," Donald hastily assured her, "if you can give me the information I'm looking for."

"How much?" asked the woman.

Her eyes were little points of avaricious Donald recoiled a little, and hesitated. The woman, keenly observant, hastened to retrieve her mistake.

"Not that I care for myself," she said, softening her nasal voice. "It's the poor thing I'm thinking of. She needs care and attention that I can't afford to give her; but if some of her friends would come across, I could do for her as any one would wish to—the poor, beautiful, young thing!"

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Donald, rendered somewhat cautious, in spite of his keen desire to hear more.

"Why, you know, of course, Mr. Mor-

ris. Who would I be speaking of to you like this? It's Miss Mary Blake I'm talking about, though I wasn't sure myself, at first, and never would have known at all if it hadn't been for that piece in the paper."

"Mary? Miss Blake?" cried Donald, starting forward. "Do you mean to tell

me you really know where she is?"

(To be concluded in the July number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

THE TWO ALTARS

WHEN Edwin reigned in Britain And Redwald ruled in Kent, The news of Christ's religion Through all the country went.

Edwin embraced it warmly, Unquestioning, content. "I will not be too hasty," Said Redwald, King of Kent.

"It may be Christ is victor, The devil safely pent; But yet I am not certain," Said Redwald, King of Kent.

"I'll give to neither worship Unqualified assent; My temple has two altars." Oh, crafty King of Kent!

"The foremost and the biggest To Christ henceforth is lent; The small one in the corner"— Oh, canny King of Kent!—

"Is burning for the devil,

Lest he should think I meant
To do him some dishonor,"

Said Redwald, King of Kent.

Now Christians rule in Britain, And Christians rule in Kent; And men believe the devil Is dead, or safely pent;

Yet in a secret corner Still some of us consent To give him one small altar, Like Redwald, King of Kent!

The Knife

WHY GEORGE MERVYN'S WIFE DID NOT GO TO PARIS WITH HARRY CHAPPELL

By Perceval Gibbon

THE suave, faintly smiling doctor, with the look of a man who has been polished and glazed, came forth from the consulting room to the anteroom

where Chappell waited in solitude.

ıll

ne

"Well," said the doctor, with a subdued cheeriness of voice, "I have made an examination, and I think the facts are quite clear. There is undoubtedly a small tumor, and it might become advisable to have it removed; but whoever put it into your wife's head "—Chappell started slightly—" that she had cancer did a very foolish thing. I have advised her regarding a régime, and I have given her a prescription. You must see that she doesn't worry. Yes, three guineas—thank you!"

Chappell sat down again, and presently, through the door by which the doctor had departed, Mrs. Mervyn entered. He rose.

"Ready?" he asked.

She came close to him, and caught nervously at the lapel of his coat.

"Harry! What did he tell you?" she

asked breathlessly.

"Hush!" he said comfortingly. "He took it for granted that I was your husband, to begin with. He went on to say that whoever let you believe that you had cancer was a fool, and made a bad mistake. The rest was about the same as he must have told you, except that I'm to see that you don't worry. So, you see, dear, it's really all right."

"But Harry — Harry!" She shook at his coat in half hysteric agitation. "The—

the operation-what did he say?"

"My dear girl," soothed Chappell, putting his arms about her shoulders, "there's no more question of an operation, for the present, than there is of cancer. What he did say was that he had found a small tumor, and that some time or other it might become advisable — not necessary, mind you, but advisable—to have it removed. That's absolutely all."

"Oh!" She leaned against him, within his arms, with a great breath of relief. "I have been so dreading it—all that horrible business with knives and needles—I can't tell you!"

"Well, there's nothing for you to dread any more," he said. "Come now, sweetheart, I'll take you home, and you shall

give me some tea. Let's toddle."

He kissed her, released her, and held open the door for her to pass out.

II

THE relations between Harry Chappell and George Mervyn's wife were at the stage where only the woman's lingering loyalty to her husband's rights of ownership restrained her from the irrevocable plunge.

George Mervyn was a partner in a business founded by his father. He was a silent man, ten years older than his wife. Chappell, on the other hand, was a rich man's heir, about her own age, and by no means silent. For all his sophistication, there was yet a tincture of boyishness in him. He was sincere and abashed, even in his vices. Tall, well made, with a fine, high, aquiline face, his path through the world had been an easy one.

Seated among the chintzes of Nan Mervyn's drawing-room, with the silver kettle singing over its spirit lamp, Chappell returned to a matter which had occupied them much of late. He had her hand in his, and he stroked it and bent and unbent its fingers caressingly while he spoke.

"When are you going to make up your mind, Nan?" he asked. "This can't go on, you know. It's—it's degrading! It 'll spoil each of us for the other. We'll have too many unpleasant memories of furtive meetings and lies and pretenses. Why not

both of us get out into the open, and have done with this miserable hole-and-corner business?"

Nan Mervyn stared at the point of her shoe. For answer, she only shook her head.

"But, Nan—we love each other, don't we? There's no doubt about that?"

"No—there's no doubt about that," she said slowly; "but I'm afraid, all the same."

"Afraid of what?" he cried. "You have only got to take the first step, Nan. The same day we should be in Paris; in six months or so we should be married. Aren't you more afraid to go on living your life here, unloved, uncherished, uncomforted,

when you have only to come with me, and

in all the rest of your life there will be nothing to be afraid of?"

She nodded, still gazing downward.

"I expect I shall do it some day, Harry," she answered. "I shall have to. You are right about my life here; but at present it's rather like bearing the pain of some disease rather than submit to the knife that would cure it. I wonder if you understand me!"

"Perhaps I do, dear," he said, and sighed. "Things been very uncomfortable

for you lately?"

"Harry, that's exactly what they are—uncomfortable! George doesn't beat me, of course. He doesn't swear at me, or get drunk, or anything like that; but he hardly ever opens his mouth. When he's at home, the house seems to be filled with some oppressive black fog. He brings work home from the office, and from the end of dinner till breakfast time I never see him. At first I thought he must be in business difficulties; but when I asked him, he said there were no difficulties of any kind."

Chappell rose from his chair and joined her on the couch where she sat. He gathered her slender body into his arms.

"Listen!" he said. "How do you think I feel when you tell me these things? I've spoken of myself, and of my need for you, as little as I could; but I can't stand this. It hurts to think of you brooding through your lonely evenings with Mervyn's personality standing over you like some great bully. It's no use, Nan darling. Sooner or later you'll have to face the knife and get it over!"

"The knife?"

"It was your own metaphor, dear. Kiss me, Nan! Now it's settled, isn't it?" She struggled feebly to be free, but he held her to him, and presently she submitted and lay still.

"When will you come, Nan?" Chappell

insisted.

"I must think!"

"No—no more thinking, darling. I'll do all the thinking for you. Now let's consider ways and means. I shall need tomorrow for arrangements. We'll go the following day."

She continued for a while to protest, to urge a longer delay; but Chappell had her in his arms, his cheek resting upon the silken softness of hers. The fragrance of her hair was in his nostrils, and his blood was

fire in his veins.

For her, too, there was a sensuous gratification in his compulsion. She trusted him. She was sure she loved him; and George Mervyn—never a person to yield excitements—had become very dreary and

oppressive of late.

And so, in the end, it was settled. The day after the next she was to leave the house as soon as her husband had departed for his office, and take a cab to Chappell's flat. Thence they would motor to Croydon, where an airplane was to be in waiting to fly them to Paris. She was to leave a note for her husband, plainly and simply stating that she had gone away with Chappell and would not return.

When Chappell rose to depart, she stood up and faced him. Her delicate face had

an unwonted flush.

"Harry," she said suddenly, "I'll face

the knife this time!"

"You darling!" he cried, and helped himself to farewell kisses.

III

NAN MERVYN sat opposite to her husband at dinner that evening, consciously endeavoring to find some new viewpoint from which to behold him. He was a man of thirty-seven, thickset, with a heavy and rather expressionless face, and the shadows of middle age were already closing in upon him. He ate his food as if unconscious of what was set before him, and between the courses he sat frowning at the cloth in an utter silence.

"Have you had a tiring day to-day, George?" asked his wife.

He looked up absently.

"Eh? I beg your pardon?" She repeated her question.

"Oh, no, thanks," he answered, with a kind of nervous haste. "No—not at all!"
"Then have you anything to do this

evening?"

he

nit-

pell

I'll

on-

to-

the

to

ner

lk-

ner

vas

ti-

ed

nd

ble

nd

he

he

ed

l's

y-

ng

a

d

d

e

d

He frowned more heavily.

"Yes," he said. "Work!"

Of himself, he volunteered no single remark throughout the meal. She tried to imagine him at dinner when he should have come home and found her note announcing her flight. She could not conceive it. Perhaps it would stir him to miss the woman at the other end of the table, if only as one misses a familiar ornament in a room. And then, brooding, frowning at the cloth, he would forget her, as now he forgot her. It would be still easier to forget her in her absence than in her presence. It might even be that he would rejoice in the relief of being rid of her.

He opened the door for her when she

rose from the table.

"Good night," she said as she passed

"Good night," he responded dully.

But her thoughts would not leave him alone. Later in the evening she went down to the little room behind the dining room which was set apart as his den, and opened the door. He was bent above a mass of papers on his desk. He had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves for his work, and she noted his great forearms with the black hair on them. He looked up, scowling a question.

"Are you very busy, George?" she asked.

"Yes!" he replied curtly.

"It's rather a pity that you should have to give up your evenings to business, as well as your days, isn't it?"

He made a grimace of impatience at the

interruption.

"It's private stuff," he answered, "and I'm in a hurry. Good night!"

She smiled at him, half in amusement,

half in derision, and departed.

She breakfasted in bed the next morning, arising only after her husband had left the house. She felt curiously disappointed that this, her last day in the home of her married life, aroused no striking emotions in her.

In the middle of the morning she sat down to compose the note for her husband. After several attempts it came out thus:

DEAR GEORGE:

I have gone away from you with my lover, Harry Chappell, and I will shortly send you the evidence necessary to gain your freedom. It has been so clear of late that my presence in your house was burdensome to you that I think you ought to be grateful to me. I hope we shall both be happy in our new lives.

NAN.

She addressed it and locked it away in a drawer of her dressing table, ready for

the letter box in the morning.

In the evening, with the letter lying upstairs, like a dagger hidden in a sleeve, she faced her husband at dinner for what was to be the last time. Yielding to the itch to tease which is the peculiar vice of some women, she yearned to earmark the evening, to leave him some memory of it that he would find significant in the light of later events.

"I suppose—" she began. He looked up more swiftly than usual. "I suppose I am to have the usual amount of your society this evening. George?"

ciety this evening, George?"
"No," he said. "If you can come to
the den for a little while, I've something

to tell you."

"Really?" A thrill of nervousness ran through her. "And why this evening in particular?"

"Because to-morrow evening I shall not have the opportunity," he answered. "I can't talk of it with the servants coming in and out. Leave it till afterward."

She pushed her plate back and stared at him. What did he know? What did he mean?

"You make me very curious," she said with difficulty.

"It's not for long," he answered. "Did you go out to-day?"

She laughed, taking firm hold of her composure.

"My dear George," she said, "you're becoming a perfect chatterbox!"

When dinner was over, she did not rise to go upstairs as of wont.

"I'll wait for you," she said. "I want to hear this wonderful news of yours. It is news, isn't it?"

He rose at once.

"Some of it is," he answered. "Come along, then."

IV

George switched on the light in the little room. He was always serious of aspect, and to-night he was serious still; but underlying his gravity was something unfamiliar—a sort of veiled alacrity. He set forth and unlocked a dispatch case, and took

therefrom a number of papers. She

watched him anxiously.

"I want you first to look at some papers which I will show you," he said. "After you've seen them and understood them, I'll tell you my news. If you'll sit here in my chair at the desk, I'll pass them to you one by one."

"What is it all about?" she murmured, taking the seat as she had been told.

"I've drawn these up specially so that they would be clear to you," he said, and laid before her a large sheet with red-ruled money columns and typed items and figures. "Supposing anything happened to me, this is how you would stand.

He had a pencil in his hand, and he leaned over her, tapping at the items as he

explained them.

"To begin with, this is your money, which I invested for you, and I have set it down at the price of the day. This is the valuation of the cottage in Kent. You see that you are worth, by yourself, exactly seven thousand pounds. Now this schedule will show you what you would be worth as a widow."

Patiently, with quiet lucidity, with explanations that explained and comments that enlightened, he took her down the

long list.

" My balance at the bank is rather large just now," he said. "It's too large, in fact; but I have recently been realizing on some rather speculative investments. row I want you to come to the bank with me, and I will transfer the account to your name."

She leaned back, to look up at him in amazement.

"But why?" she gasped. "And to-morrow! I-I couldn't come to-morrow."

"It must be to-morrow, I'm afraid," he said quietly. "I'll tell you why presently. You see that you won't be badly off-if anything should happen some day. This " -he took up another document-" is my will. I executed it at my solicitors' to-day. I can tell you what it contains. It leaves you everything. That's all. These are my insurance policies."

She sprang up.

"George!" she almost screamed. "You

aren't going to commit suicide?" "Don't be silly!" he said sharply. " Now I'm going to put all these papers in the safe and hand you the key. Then I'll tell you my news."

She watched, fascinated by the deliberate method of his movements as he opened the safe and arranged the documents on the shelves within. She took the key which he proffered her dumbly. She was aware that something was impending-something that terrified her from afar.

George Mervyn took an armchair some ten feet from her, crossed his knees, leaned

back, and smiled.

"Well, Nan!" he said. "I've tried to save you from worrying, but I don't know that I've succeeded very well. The truth is that I've got to undergo rather a serious operation. I've had a good deal of pain lately. That's why I worked at night to get my affairs in order, in case they should suddenly become your affairs."

She was staring at him. Her face had

gone deadly pale.

"An operation!" she repeated. "The knife!" she added involuntarily.

He smiled a little wryly.

"Don't!" he said. "I've been dream-

ing of knives lately."

"But what is it?" she asked, shuddering. She, too, had dreamed of knives. What is the matter with you?"
"Don't be frightened," he warned her,

but she leaped to her feet with a strange,

shrill cry.

"I know! I know!" she babbled. "I know what it is-it's cancer!"

As he nodded gravely, she held up passionately clasped hands.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" she cried.

Ere George Mervyn could start upright in a horror of surprise, she was at his feet, her head upon his knees, sobbing in an utter abandon.

"George, George, I won't leave you! I won't leave you! I'll never leave you! You should have told me. I could have borne it with you. George, George, don't be afraid of the knife. Don't be afraid, dear!"

"Why, Nan, girl!" He raised her and drew her to his lap, and held her close. "I'm not afraid of anything that gives me my wife like this. It's worth it, whatever happens!"

The Mervyns ran across Harry Chappell in Paris, when they were on their way to convalesce at Nice. Mervyn asked him to dinner; but he had another engagement, and was unable to come.

Joe Bush and the White Crow

A JAPANESE STRONG MAN WEAKENS IN THE ACID TEST OF THE SHINJU RITE

By Herman Howard Matteson

THE native Aleutian Islander dearly loves to carry tales. This fact not; withstanding, Captain James Cosgrove, commander of the coast guard ship Wolf, during twenty years of service off the Alaskan coast, had found the Aleut to be reasonably truthful. For this reason, while the tale that came to him was vague as to details, the "old man," as he was called with no disrespect by his crew, thought it necessary to investigate.

So he began to think over the personnel of his craft, seeking to decide which man he would choose to go ashore on Nigchik Island, in order to look into matters related by the Aleut, and, if a murder had been committed, to fetch in the murderer dead or alive. A bit of gratuitous advice offered by the grinning Aleut not a little nettled the captain, and, incidentally, helped him

to decide to send Joe Bush.

"Two camps of Japanese on Nigchik Island," the Aleut said. "The Japs in two camps hate each other very great deal. One Japanese they call Aoki, he make a Japanese in the other camp to die. I don't know who die or how Aoki kill him. My cousin, he tell me this. My cousin no lie. My cousin sell fish."

Failing to grasp any convincing relationship between fishmongering and truth-telling, Captain Cosgrove impatiently demand-

ed further details.

"I tell all," said the Aleut. "I tell all my cousin say to me. My cousin no lie. You captain man, you better send five, six mans ashore on Nigchik. This Aoki, he very strong man and bad man. He pass bear for strong, this Aoki does. He wrestler. He jujutsu. He shoot bow and arrow. He bad man, and he pass bear for strong. You send maybe five, six mans to catch um."

The captain snorted derisively. Send five or six coast guard men to take one murderer? Well, hardly! With his outfit of nervy boys, he had more than once demonstrated, along a thousand miles of savage shore, that one coast guard man could cope with any situation.

Through the length and breadth of the Aleuts, it had come to be an accepted fact that when a guard man came ashore after a culprit, that culprit, perhaps more or less damaged, sometimes quite dead, always accompanied the guard man back to the Wolf. This present murder on Nigchik was no

time to depart from the system.

The Japanese were a somewhat new factor in Aleut affairs. Rather numerously the little brown men had been flocking to Nigchik, as Captain Cosgrove knew. Asbestos deposits had been discovered there, and they were prospecting and opening up mines of the precious mineral wool with the Japanese present on Nigchik in formidable number, and a murderous factional war raging between rival camps—well, it might be well to send more than one man.

But there was the system, the established rule, never to send more than one man, no matter how heavy the odds. The moral effect of it was tremendous. Captain Cosgrove hated to relinquish the advantage thus gained among the Aleuts, the Russians, the Eskimos, the miscellaneous half-

castes, and now the Japanese.

"You say this Aoki, the murderer, is a strong man?" demanded the captain.

"Oh, yes—he pass bear for strong. He take it like so, my cousin say—two, three white mans in each hand—and go like this."

In lively pantomime the Aleut showed how Aoki, the strong man, would whack half a dozen white skulls together.

"So he's strong and he's bad? All right! I've a boy aboard that makes a specialty of strong, bad men. Orderly, send Joe Bush here."

The grinning Aleut climbed over the side with the plug of tobacco that Cosgrove had given him, as a reward, and paddled away

in his kavak.

Joe Bush, in response to the call, came up the companion stair from the glory hole, crossed the deck, knocked, and entered the

captain's cabin.

The captain, seated in his swivel chair, turned and regarded Joe Bush with admiration. Joe's head nearly touched the ceiling of the cabin. His wrists were as thick as towing hawsers, and nearly as rough.

Joe was a fellow of huge size and vast good nature. He laughed easily. He could sing songs of the sea to make all split, and could dance a sort of compromise between the hornpipe and the shimmy that rattled the deck planking on the stanchions. He could wind an ash bar about the capstan head as if it had been a willow wand.

He had no end of nerve, but at a certain stage of affairs he was apt to go what the Alaskan Indians call hiyu pelton-which is to say stark, raving crazy. Then Joe Bush was dangerous. Further features of Ioe's somewhat anomalous character were that he was a sentimentalist, loved to sing mushy songs to the accompaniment of the accordion, and was inclined to be a dandy in the care of his dress and person.

All these points of Joe's character, strong and weak, Captain Cosgrove reviewed in his mind as he sat studying the big fellow

standing before the door.

" Joe," said the old man finally, "I've picked a tough job for you. It is reported that one Aoki, a Jap, has killed another Jap on Nigchik Island. Aoki is reputed to be a killer, a bad man. I want you to investigate. If you find that Aoki is guilty, fetch him off to the Wolf, dead or alive. Use your head, Joe, and not your heartyour head, and your fists, if necessary. If very necessary, use that old navy gun hanging at your belt. I'll say this, Joe-I'm running you up against a tough game. If you fetch Aoki here a prisoner, it is going to mean promotion for you, the white crow to wear upon your sleeve. Dobson will take you ashore in the dinghy. Good luck, Toe!

Joe Bush walked from the cabin and climbed down the sea ladder into the

dinghy. The white crow to wear on his sleeve if he fetched out Aoki, the strong man, the murderer! The white crow-thus the service men spoke of the nickel eagle upon the sleeve that told of rank and service. The white crow!

As the dinghy rowed shoreward, Joe sat looking down at the sleeve of his jacket, admiring, in imagination, the white crow that soon would be perched there.

A DIRECT actionist always, Joe Bush wasted no time in cautious reconnoitering, but plunged directly into a fairly well worn trail that led inland from the shore. He had gone no great distance when he discovered the scattered huts of one of the colonies of Japanese asbestos hunters. Unaware whether this would be the camp of Aoki's kinsmen or that of his alleged victim, Joe walked into the midst of a number of Orientals who were digging away at a hole in the hillside.

"I'm looking for a party by the name of Aoki," said Joe. "Show him to me!"

The Japanese smiled and shook their They spoke no English; but one of them ran to the most pretentious hut of the camp, and returned with a betterdressed, superior-looking brown man who

"Aoki is not of this camp," said the superior one crisply. "I do not know where you will find him." While he was speaking, the Japanese was eying the heavy navy gun that hung from Joe's hip, and was sizing up the vast bulk of the man in uniform. "Aoki is not of this camp. Therefore, he is not here. We that are his enemies cannot be expected to know his whereabouts."

"It was reported to my old man that this Aoki killed some one. Who did he kill, and why?"

The spokesman for the camp of the enemies of Aoki shook his head.

"Aoki kill no one of this camp, or of any other, so far as I know."

Bush began to scrutinize the Japanese closely. Something about the man's demeanor and tone of voice excited Joe's

suspicions.

"You say he didn't kill any of your out-How did the story get to us that he did? Must have been some kind of a fight, some kind of a head-on, between you two camps of Japanese. Come on and tell. Hasn't any one been killed in this camp lately?"

Again the Japanese shook his head.

his

ng

ius

gle

V-

sat

et.

w

ell

e.

he

ne

n-

of

C-

ir

e

e

"My kinswoman, the little girl called Suki, died yesterday. Aoki did not kill her. She died by her own hand, of a dagger thrust. Aoki did not kill her."

Again suspicion entered the mind of Joe Bush. The Japanese was not telling the truth, or perhaps he was telling only part of it. There was some mystery here. The infinite bitterness in his voice, the expression of hate in his little, beady eyes when he spoke of Aoki, although his words exonerated the alleged murderer, warned Joe that he was up against some puzzling form of duplicity.

"You mind if I fetch a look at the body

of the dead girl?" asked Joe.

The Japanese lifted a hand and waved it toward the hills.

"She is there," he said. "Suki's body is not here. She is there, in the hills."

Concluding that further questioning would be useless, and determined to visit the rival camp and to find Aoki as expeditiously as possible, Joe asked for directions. The Japanese pointed to a trail.

"The camp of Aoki and his kinsmen lies there, ten minutes' walk away."

Joe started to enter the trail, but the hand of the brown man stayed him.

"A moment, white gentleman," he sug-"You are an officer. You go to seek Aoki. Perhaps you will attempt to arrest him on suspicion. Aoki, I happen to know, is of the old Samurai. The Samurai swear vows that never will they be taken alive in battle, never will they submit to arrest or detention by the hand of one alien to the Samurai. If you arrest Aoki, it will be his dead body only. I warn you in friendship, white gentleman, take no chances with Aoki, for he is a man who kills. If, however, in the exercise of your authority, you kill Aoki, I will pay you two thousand dollars for his body-two thousand dollars!"

More mystery! What on earth could this Japanese of a rival camp want with the body of Aoki? Concluding that it was some Oriental hocus-pocus—perhaps some kind of superstition—Joe walked on rapidly. He called back over his shoulder that he couldn't agree to sell the body of Aoki; that it was bad luck to bargain away anything until you had it.

The second camp of Japanese, Joe found,

was a duplicate of the first—a number of squalid huts, one hut larger and finer than the rest, and a dozen little brown men digging away at holes in the hills. As in the first instance, a Japanese appeared who acted as spokesman for the camp.

"Aoki killed no one," said this personage, looking suspiciously on Joe, his uniform, and the heavy revolver at his hip.

"How about the little girl called Suki?"

Joe jerked his thumb in the direction of
the first camp.

A snarl showed upon the spokesman's face for an instant, to be succeeded by the practical, unctuous smile of ingratiation.

"No, no! Aoki did not kill the girl Suki. She died by her own hand."

"Maybe so," said Joe. "Just the same, I want to meet up with this Aoki and hold a little wauwau with him. Whereabouts is he berthed?"

A vague, sweeping gesture that comprehended the far-flung hills was Joe's only answer.

"Why seek him?" demanded the Japanese, a hint of threat in his voice. "He has done no crime. Why seek him?"

"Never you mind why. Just you tell me where he is, if you know. If you do know, you'd better tell. I'll find him. Just you warp to that—I'll find him!"

"For you to find Aoki will be your gravest misfortune," was the sneering reply. "He will twist and break your bones as I crack a dry stick. He is the strongest man of all the Nipponese. He is a Samurai. He will never be taken alive. That is the yow of the Samurai."

"All right! All right!" agreed Joe complacently. "Some likes to be took one way, some another. It's all right. Seeing as how I can't expect no help from you regarding Aoki's hide-out, I'll be going. I'll find him!"

For the second time, as he was about to proceed further in the quest for the strong man, Joe was brought to a halt.

"You may take him, you may, with that." The Japanese was pointing to the big navy service gun. "That way only you will take Aoki. Honorable white man, if you kill Aoki, I will give you two thousand dollars legal money for his body—two thousand dollars!"

"I ain't contracting no future deliveries," said Joe; "but I'll think about it."

Joe hurried on through the camp, and traversed a thicket of scrub spruce. Here

the trail ended. He climbed over the bowlders and up and down the rough, wooded hillsides. All day he searched for Aoki, the strong man. Here and there Joe found prospect holes where Aoki, or some one, had been looking for signs of the asbestos deposit; but nothing of Aoki.

Night came on. Joe was in the middle of Nigchik Island, too far from either of the coasts to return to shore in the darkness. Philosophically, he began fumbling about for some place in which to camp down for the night.

Ш

Top was climbing a hill on which he had seen an outcropping ledge that might afford shelter for the night, when his ears caught the silvery tinkle of a little bell. He paused to listen. Again the bell chimed, and Joe climbed on in the direction whence the sound had come.

Clambering over a barricade of tumbled rocks, he discovered the faint flicker of candlelight. Again there came the sound of the bell, and of a human voice droning

words meaningless to Joe.

Further on he crept. In a niche among the rocks stood a tiny building with a pagodalike roof. Lighted candles gleamed from within through open door and windows. Before the door of the little temple stood a fat, squat image of Buddha, and before the image was a Japanese priest, with shaven head, garbed in a robe that fell to the ground.

The priest lifted the bell, rang it, and resumed the droning of his ritual. When he ceased, Joe walked forward. Showing no trace either of surprise or of alarm, the priest regarded the white man calmly.

"I was looking for a Jap called Aoki," said Joe, a little embarrassed by the other man's silence and unconcern. "Could you give me any idea where he's berthed? daybreak I aim to keep on and find him."

Still the priest did not answer, but stood appraising Joe Bush-the size of him, the

uniform, the gun at his belt.

So long did the priest stand silently gazing that Joe began to feel ill at ease. That some powerful emotion engrossed the Buddhist was attested by the trembling of his hand and arm as he pointed away into the darkness. His eyes glowed with a somber light that reminded Joe of moistened match heads rubbed in the dark.

"I know where Aoki is," said the priest,

his voice hollow, sepulchral. "He is there, hidden in a deep canon. Why do you seek him?"

"Why, I-that is-you see," Joe stammered, as for the first time he realized that upon the authority of the Japanese of both camps he really had no valid reason for seeking Aoki. "Fact is," he continued, "I come ashore to get Aoki for murder. Come to find out, they say he didn't murder no one. They tell me she killed herself; but there's a kind of a skew list to their yarns, at that. I aim to find Aoki personal and have a talk with him."

Again the priest stood studying Joe

Bush.

"Come!" he said finally, turning toward

the door of the little temple.

At the door, the priest slipped his feet from the coarse grass sandals that he was wearing, and pointed to Joe to remove his shoes. Joe leaned over, untied the laces, and stood with the shoes in his hand, feeling rather foolish.

In response to the priest's gesture, Joe placed his shoes on the earth, beside the sandals, and followed on into the temple.

Upon a sort of altar in the center of the little room of worship was something covered with a scarlet cloth richly embroidered with gold figures of dragons and birds in flight. The priest knelt and muttered his words of prayer. Then he rose, and, with a quick but respectful motion, swept the scarlet cloth from the altar.

"Behold!" he said, pointing. lies the earth form of the little girl called Suki. May she tread the sevenfold paths

of peace!"

For a moment Joe gazed upon the waxen features, and upon the tiny hands folded across the bosom that was still forever. For so brief a time did the priest permit the body to be exposed to the guardman's gaze that Joe had only a vague impression of the girl's childlike, regular features. They were young, very young, in years, but still they bore an expression of age, of suffering, of hope deferred, of defeat.

" As the moon outshines in radiance the stars, so love overmasters hate." these words, uttered in a low voice, the priest redraped the scarlet and gold cloth over the body of the girl called Suki. "Now, come!" he said.

At the door of the temple he recovered his grass sandals. Joe slipped on his shoes and followed the lead of the Buddhist to a small hut that stood a little distance behind the temple.

"I will tell you the story of Suki, and of the strong man Aoki," said the priest,

pointing for Joe to be seated.

As the Buddhist priest related the simple tale, his voice monotonous and unimpassioned as of one who tells a story that is very old, his listener cracked the joints of his big fingers and once or twice drove fist into palm with a noise like a pistol shot. At the conclusion, Joe Bush rose to his feet.

"I'll be warping out," he said. "You telling me where this Aoki is berthed, chances is I find him, even if it is dark.

I'll be warping out."

The Buddhist priest offered neither objection nor comment, but silently lifted his hands, as if in benediction. Joe walked from the cabin and entered the dense darkness that lay beyond the narrow circle of

candlelight.

For an hour he crawled over bowlders and felt his way down gulleys. Only by studying the hills silhouetted against the night sky could he maintain his direction; but finally he found the place. He nearly stepped upon the sleeping Aoki, who lay wrapped in a blanket and huddled up against a rock.

As Joe leaned above the powerful form, the moon thrust its brim above the hills.

"Ahoy, Aoki! Slip your hawse on that snore! I want to speak with you."

Joe Bush stirred the strong man in the ribs with his foot. With a confused cry, Aoki awakened. Animal instinct warning him that danger was near, he sprang to his feet and without a word attacked with a furious abandon.

In the first assault Joe Bush went down, with Aoki on top. Madly the Japanese strove for one of the merciless holds that would break Joe's thick arm, and perhaps tear the arm from its shoulder socket; but Joe broke the grip about his wrist, and struck Aoki a blow upon the side of the head that sent him diving among the rocks.

Aoki rebounded to his feet and was up and upon the guardman again within the slice of a second. Rolling, tumbling like fighting dogs, the strong man of Japan and the strongest white man in the annals of the coast guard battled there in the half darkness among the bowlders.

Bruised and bleeding, one arm almost useless, but the soul of him fired by the picture of the wax-faced girl lying beneath the scarlet shroud in the temple, Joe Bush fought on. Time and again he tore free from the torturing jujutsu attack. Again and again he smashed Aoki to the earth, only to brace himself for the next unabated attack of the Samurai.

There is no saying how long the battle lasted. Joe does not know. He can't remember. It may have been five minutes—

ten minutes-an hour.

Finally, in spite of the brown man's strength and agility and his tricks of attack, Joe began to know that he was winning an advantage. Less furious were the onslaughts of Aoki. Less quick was his recovery from the pistonlike blows that Joe drove against the wrestler's face and breast. The white man was winning, by no aid from his heavy navy gun, which still hung in the holster, but with the strength that nature had given him, the fury that the wistful face of Suki had inspired.

As Aoki sprang for the last mad assault, Joe seized him by the shoulder, twisted him, and brought his own forearm across his antagonist's windpipe. He was using a jujutsu trick on his own account. Slowly, but with a pinch like that of a ship's clamp, he began to shut down upon Aoki's wind.

Aoki's eyes began to start, to grow red. His breath whistled. His tongue lolled.

With a final desperate effort he yanked free, ran his hand down between his shoulders, dragged out a long-bladed knife, and lunged with it.

Joe gashed his hand as he too lunged, but he caught the wrist of Aoki's knife hand. Breast to breast the adversaries fell, with Joe atop. Shortly he rose, staggered, and wiped a hand across his eyes. Then he knelt.

Aoki was lying very still, his own knife buried nearly to the hilt in his side.

TV

Joe Bush stood upon the bleak shore of Nigchik Island. He lifted a hand lamely and waved rather weakly. A toot of the guardship's whistle answered him. The dinghy put off. Joe was rowed out to the Wolf, and he climbed slowly up the sea ladder, his mates of the crew lining the rail to jeer and deride.

"Whereabouts is your prisoner, Joe? Mussed your hair up for you, didn't he? I don't see you wearing no white crow on

your sleeve, Joe! How come?"

Joe distributed a wry grin among his fellows, walked through the bunch of men, knocked at the door of Captain Cosgrove's cabin, and entered.

The captain turned in his swivel chair to regard the torn uniform and the bruises and cuts upon the hands and features of his emissary.

"Well, Joe!" he said. "I see that you haven't brought me Aoki, the strong man.

"I've went and did a fool thing, captain," said Joe Bush humbly. "Likely you'll bust me, and tin-can me out of the service. I went and did just what you told me not to do—let my feelings run off with my head, such head as I got. Actual, Aoki didn't kill this girl; but I figured that in reality he did kill her. Then, for the next few moves, I went ahead just like he had killed her. Technical, I know, I was wrong."

Cosgrove waited to hear the story.

"You see, captain," Joe went on, "back in Japan, Aoki and this girl Suki was articled to marry. They come here to Nigchik. Feeling got so high between the rival camps that the head man of Aoki's camp, he takes and tells Aoki he can't marry Suki. Suki's outfit, they tell her the same—that she can't marry Aoki nohow; but this little Suki is game as can be, and she says she'll marry Aoki anyway. Aoki is a quitter, yellow. He's scared of his head man, Aoki is, and he side-steps the wedding, though all the time the Budd priest, who ain't of any faction, stands ready to sign 'em up.

"Final, though, Aoki kind of gets ashamed. He meets Suki, and together they go to the temple. While Aoki ain't ready to face down his outfit and marry Suki, he goes far enough to kneel with her and swear a vow they call shinju. dope on this shinju is that if obstacles keep on preventing the wedding of two parties, why, on a certain day they both commit suicide. Then a Budd priest, he takes and marries their ashes, and they're happy in bliss forever afterward, traveling together along a road they call the sevenfold path. Suki and Aoki, they swear this vow, and they name a day that both of 'em will shove off permanent if the two camps keep on objecting to the wedding.

"Well, both camps keep on objecting very lively. The day comes, and Suki, she stands all day looking out over the hills, waiting for Aoki. Till nightfall she is going to wait, such being the agreement. The Budd priest, privately sizing Aoki up for yellow, knows Aoki won't come; so he goes where Suki is standing and tries to argue her out of her notion. Suki tells the priest that love outshines the sun and so forth, and is stronger than death and so on, and just as the sun goes down she grabs out a little dagger, sings out that she is the shinju bride, and stabs herself.

"Now you see, captain, I got terrible hostile when I looked at little Suki lying in the temple, and the old Budd telling me her story. I goes right out in the dark to find this jujutsu party. I found him all right. Him and me kind of wrastled a while, and then he drawed a knife and we fell down, and somehow the knife got poked into him in the region of the liver. Yes, he

was good and dead.

"Now, captain, I'm coming to the part of the yarn that will make you terrible disgusted. Instead of me packing out this Aoki, fetching him here like you ordered. why, I take and pack it up the mountain to the temple. Fact! I was weak in the head. You see, this Suki had banked on marrying Aoki in the shinju rite, the priest saying a hocus-pocus over the two dead bodies that joined their souls and made 'em happy forever. While I figured this Aoki was a bilge rat, and not fitten to be Suki's husband, just the same she wanted him bad; so I packs the body up to the temple, and the old priest said his say-so. They're married now, Suki and Aoki. shinju man and wife; but both camps is hostile as can be. Both camps offered me two thousand dollars for the body of Aoki. You see, both camps was so plumb mad they offered real money to keep Aoki and Suki from getting married even shinju; but they're married now, Suki and Aoki."

Joe Bush paused and heaved a sigh.
"I'm sorry I didn't obey orders, captain, and fetch Aoki here. Are you going to bust me, captain? Tell me, and have

it over."

For a long time the old man sat regarding the battered but triumphant figure of the sentimentalist. Then he leaned forward and pressed a button. Promptly a seaman knocked and opened the door.

"Tell the ship's tailor to come here to my cabin," said the captain. "Tell him to bring along a needle and thread, and a white crow to sew on the sleeve of Joe Bush."

Wild Bird

A STORY OF THE WILD NEW LANDS OF THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST

By Hulbert Footner

Author of "The Man Hunt," "Country Love," "Thieves' Wit," etc.

XXV

THEY did not go ashore again. The hours passed. Finally the sun went down, but Chako still paddled doggedly on.

From feeling too much Ann ceased to feel anything. She was solely concerned now with saving herself. Her brain was

busy.

"What shall I do when we go ashore?" she thought. "I've got to have sleep. I might steal away from Chako's camp and hide, and get some sleep; but then he would know I suspected him. Anyhow, how could I sleep with the chance of his coming on me at any moment? No, he's got to sleep, too. The safest thing would be to lie down just as usual, where I can watch him. I won't sleep until he sleeps, and I'll trust my instinct to wake me when he wakes. I might have a chance to throw his gun in the water while he sleeps; but he could kill me just as well with his hands."

Darkness was gathering when the shores of the little river suddenly fell back, and they found themselves out on a dusky blue sheet of water, reflecting the dying light of the sky. Ann recognized with a little thrill that they had come to the lake at the head of the cañon. There was no other such place. Indeed, she could presently hear the roaring of the waters in the gorge below, though at first only as a murmur.

All the southerly side of the lake was bounded by low cliffs, pale in the dying light. On the other side the trees came down to the water's edge. The landing place was down at the end of this tree-lined shore, where broken rocks ran out in

a point. Around that point was the awful chute down which the waters poured into the gorge.

Chako let the canoe ground lightly on the shingle, and laid down his paddle. Ann had to get out first. In doing so she had to turn around and present her back to Chako. She did not hesitate. Whatever comes must come, she told herself.

Nevertheless it was with a sort of surprise that she found herself alive and on firm ground once more. She turned and lifted the canoe a little higher, according

to their custom.

Chako climbed out over the baggage. He left his gun behind him. Seeing this, Ann's knees began to shake under her. She could stand the strain, but to have it suddenly relieved unnerved her. She crept away a pace or two, and dropped on the ground, fighting to avert a collapse.

"After paddling all day," she thought, "while I sat idle, he will have a right to demand that I should get the supper."

She desperately put her limp limbs in motion again. Blindly seeking from tree to tree, she gathered a thick handful of the little dry spines, as he had once showed her. By the time he had carried the bedding and the food ashore, she had a fire started.

Chako carried his gun ashore, and rested it against a tree, near where he had thrown his bed roll. Ann was always electrically conscious of the position of that gun. He left the bag of gold where it was in the canoe. He was too weary to shoulder it. He opened his bedding, and flung himself down upon it. The gun was within reach of his hand.

Chako had paddled about sixteen hours

this day, and upon insufficient food. Fatigue was a grand corrective of the unholy passions that filled him, and his look at Ann was almost indifferent. Glancing at him while she washed the rice and sliced the bacon, Ann reflected:

"He'll have to sleep to-night. I'll get

some rest."

To the next day she gave no thought. All her energies were concentrated on liv-

ing from moment to moment.

He came to the fire when she called him. He sat on his side, she on hers. They passed things back and forth with an appearance of amity, though few words were spoken. It seemed as if Chako would never have done eating.

"It will renew his strength and his rage,"

Ann thought bitterly.

"Cook some more," he said harshly.

"There's plenty cached at the other side of the canon."

Ann wondered if he meant that there

would be only one to eat it.

When he had finished, Ann set about washing the plates and the frying pan. Since he had left his gun over by the tree, she felt in no immediate danger. Heavy with food, Chako reclined on the same spot, supporting himself on his elbow, and glancing at Ann from time to time from under lowered lids.

What was he thinking of? She gave it up with a shrug. Only one thing was clear—he had not relented toward her. At the moment he was sluggish from eating, but

his purpose had not changed.

After all was in order, he still made no move to seek his blankets. So as not to give any appearance of avoiding him, Ann returned to her former place by the fire. About half a dozen feet separated them. Chako sat up, refilled his pipe, lighted it, and drew on it with evident satisfaction. Ann glanced at him from time to time with a sad wonder. How he could enjoy his food and his tobacco?

For a while they sat in silence. The fire died down. The air trembled under the hoarse rumble of the torrent below, muffled by the intervening walls of rock. From where they sat under the pines, the lake was like a corselet of blued steel, reflecting the clear night sky. Over the cliffs on the other side the sky was brightening.

As they sat in silence, Ann's exquisitely sharpened intuition became aware of something that was drawing her and Chako together—something madly sweet, which did not lessen her danger, however, but increased it.

Chako suddenly took his pipe out of his mouth, and, pointing with the stem across the lake, said:

" Moon's coming up."

It did not surprise Ann that his deep voice had resumed its purring note, like a lion's. She expected it. Her heart galloped off.

"Up north the moon's a crazy wench," Chako went on. "You'll see to-night—she'll just circle over the cliffs a little way, and go down almost in the place where she came up."

He spoke in a savage, amorous purr like a lion's. There was no change in him, no softening toward Ann.

"How white your arm is in the shadow!"

murmured Chako:

Ann nervously rolled down her sleeve and buttoned it. A chuckle sounded in his throat.

"Mustn't I ever remember you're awoman?"

"Did you forget it?" Ann whispered. The implication was lost on him.

"And a beauty," he added. "Your throat is like snow!"

Something in his insolent love-making made Ann's very blood abject, and caused her to dissolve in weakness. If he touched her, how could she resist him? But what a shameful surrender that would be. She would deserve no better fate than to be killed wantonly.

"Look at me!" murmured Chako.

She did the only thing she could think of—arose and coolly moved the embers of the fire apart with the toe of her boot.

"It was agreed that that sort of talk was to be cut out," she said. "I'm going

to turn in."

Turning her back to him, she proceeded to spread out her bed, trembling in every nerve, listening in sick suspense to hear what he would do.

He made no move at all, and she was obliged to look at him. It was too dark for her to read his expression. He finally got up, grunting with stiffness. He seemed to hesitate a moment, then turned to his own bed.

"He did not want me very much!" Ann

thought bitterly.

Chako prepared his bed with a certain ostentatious air that was not lost on Ann.

If he desired to suggest to her how keen he was for his bed, it must mean that he had no intention of sleeping if he could avoid it.

Having gone to the lake to wash and drink, he lay down with his back to her. Ann was in a fever of anxiety because she could not see what had become of the gun. Apparently he had slipped it under the edge

of his bed.

They lay in their blankets, feet to the lake, with a distance of about twenty feet separating them. The moon came up over the cliffs and flooded their little camping place with her level rays. Ann could see better now. Sleep was far from her eyes. By and by Chako rolled over, and his face became visible to her as a pale, oval patch. His eyes were but two pools of shadow in it, and she could not tell if they were open or shut. Presumably, however, they were open, and were straining to discover if her eyes were open.

Should she let him know that she was awake? Not unless he made some further

move.

She watched him, and with a dull pain tried to figure out in her mind what it was that made men so passionately bent on destruction. She could understand how anybody, man or woman, could get started wrong; but what was it in human nature that forced a man, once started wrong, so blindly and insanely to hold to his course? Why was it, when he was wrong, that honesty and love maddened him, instead of curing him? It was too difficult. She had to give it up.

After a long while—she could not have told how long—she saw Chako, with infinite caution, raise himself on his elbow.

Her heart rose in her throat.

"What's the matter?" she asked quietly. He caught his breath sharply, and dropped back.

"Thought I heard something moving

about," he muttered.

Nothing more was said. Ann feared that Chako must know now that she was aware of his murderous intentions. Henceforth it must be a duel between them to see who could stay awake the longer. To-night the advantage was with Ann, because Chako was dog-weary.

The minutes dragged by leadenly. Ann was conscious of a weak fatigue that threatened tears. She had no desire for sleep. Her eyes were propped open; but she knew

she must sleep. She concentrated all her faculties upon listening for Chako's breathing. The night was still enough, except for the rumble of the torrent. She imagined at last that she heard Chako's breathing settle deep and slow. Even so, he might be feigning.

Ann in her turn arose in her bed, but in a different manner from Chako. She sat

bolt upright.

There was no answering move, no sound, from Chako. Still, he might be leading her on. She threw the blankets off her, and stood up. Still no move from him! With a thickly beating heart she took a few steps toward him. Her feet were bare.

He was certainly asleep. She could see his face pretty clearly in the moonlight. Not only were his eyes closed, but the lines of his face were softened; he could hardly

feign that.

There is not much difference in men asleep—or dead. Ann saw only the weary youth, and nothing of the hellish spirit that animated him waking. An intolerable longing made her breast tight. If she could but have him so!

She turned back to her own bed, prepared to sleep now; but she was arrested by the picture framed in the opening of the trees. With the moon in her eyes, the lake no longer appeared steely and glimmering, but had become gray and vague. There were shadowy lines across it, which denoted the gradually quickening current. One could hear the water sucking around the stones alongshore, as it was drawn off toward the inferno around the point.

Below Ann, in the immediate foreground, lay the canoe, full of moonlight, and presenting all its shadows toward her. In the middle of it rose the pursy bag of gold, tied tightly about its middle, with the top half

flopping over.

That was the focus of the whole scene. That was what arrested Ann's eyes, and drove the thought of sleep out of her head. The source of all her agony—there squatted the insensate thing! There was something unspeakably loathsome in its aspect, the lank end lolling over against the fat stomach.

The sight of it suddenly enraged and sickened Ann. A flame was lighted in her vitals that maddened her with pain. She ceased to be a reasonable creature. The beastly thing! Her fingers curved like claws with the desire to rend it.

There it lay for the moment unprotected. What a chance! If only Chako did not waken!

A vivid picture of the storm of waters around the point sprang before Ann's eyes. She had only to launch the canoe for it to be lost beyond power of recovery. True, the boat was their means of salvation, too; and Chako would certainly kill her if she lost him his gold. What matter? How gladly she could die if she first destroyed that!

She glanced fearfully over her shoulder. Chako slept like a dead man. She stepped down softly in her bare feet. The canoe was drawn up on the shingle for half its length. She pitted her strength against its weight. Under ordinary circumstances she could never have stirred it, but nerved with a passion as she was, she succeeded in moving it an inch.

She could not push it over the shingle, for fear of waking Chako. She had to lift the end an inch at a time; but with every inch she moved it, a little more of the weight was taken up by the water under the stern. It was a slow job. Her back cracked under the strain. If only Chako

did not wake!

Midway in her labors she happened to notice the two paddles lying in the bottom. Obeying a subconscious prompting, she reached in for them, and laid them down on the shore.

Finally the canoe floated. Ann thrilled with a terrible satisfaction; but it was not yet out of Chako's reach. She crept slowly into the icy water, pushing it, careful to make no splash. The pebbly bottom dropped away quite steeply—ankle-deep, knee-deep, thigh-deep, waist-deep. Finally, gathering up all her strength, she shoved the light craft out into the swift current, and a wild, triumphant cry broke from her lips.

Chako awoke with a jump, and instantly came leaping down with a roar of rage. He plunged into the lake. Ann fled aside from him. He disregarded her. He forged through the impeding water with arms outstretched. Flinging himself in bodily, he swam. In a score of powerful strokes he reached the canoe, caught hold of the gunwale, and, with the trick of a practiced canoeist, swung himself aboard.

He searched frantically in the bottom for a paddle. Seeing that there was none, another dreadful cry of rage escaped him. Half beside himself, he squatted in the bottom of the canoe and paddled with his hands. The canoe answered sluggishly to the impulse, but the current had her now. She was carried down, slowly at first, gaining a little speed with every yard.

Ann's heart failed her. She caught up one of the paddles on the shore, and flung it toward him with all her might. It whirled around, and flapped in the water far short of him. It was useless to him.

The canoe was fairly in the grip of the current now, moving relentlessly toward the hoarse bellow of the inferno around the corner. Ann kept pace with it, scrambling over the rocks along the shore, tearing at her hair, and screaming witlessly:

"Come back! Come back! Come back!"

Chako soon saw that his efforts were useless. He stood up in the canoe in an attitude of tragic despair, an arm over his head. Then he dived in.

It appeared as if he had waited too long. Canoe and man were now entering into the funnel which gathered all the water of the lake to a point, preparatory to discharging it down that fearful chute. Chako could not possibly win back to the shore he had left. His only hope lay in a rocky promontory lower down, whose base was washed by the deep current; but the surface of the rock was as smooth as if it had been sculptured.

Ann saw the rocky promontory. With a superhuman effort she reached it in time, and, flinging herself down upon it, dug in her toes, and reached down. She caught Chako's arms as his finger nails scratched the smooth surface. Chako wound his arms about her arms, and pulled himself out of the water. At the moment Ann was no more to him than something to pull himself out by.

The instant he gained a foothold he dropped her, and set off, crouching, running, scrambling up over the broken rocks to the top of the cañon wall. Ann followed, breathless.

Below them the canoe was fairly launched on that strange, smooth slide of water. It glided down in the moonlight with elegant grace, its fat little passenger squatting amidships like a baby—holding on tightly, one would swear. Where the water boiled up at the foot of the slide, the canoe appeared to leap bodily into the air, its dark shape silhouetted against the white

foam. Then, apparently, it was overwhelmed; but it immediately appeared below, still dancing madly and lightly amid the flung-up waters. It passed out of sight around the bend in the walls.

Chako, Ann trailing after, gained the top of the low cliff, where the way was comparatively smooth and clear. The two of them ran across the rock floor, cutting off the first bend, and came to the lip of the

cañon farther along.

The waters were in full turmoil here, and the roar of it rose up with stunning force. The moon did not shine into this hole, but Ann dimly apprehended the gigantic billows, undulating in a strange, savage regularity, ripped and laced with white. Again, for an instant, she saw the dark, slender shape of the canoe leaping over the billows, like a horse over successive barriers. It seemed to stand fairly on end, half its length out of water; then it passed out of sight around the next bend.

Chako had run on, and she started to follow; but her unnatural strength failed her at last. She fell headlong and lay still,

unable to get up.

By and by she heard Chako coming slowly back. She instinctively scrambled to her feet, unmindful of the pains that racked her body. She saw him approaching in the moonlight, his arms hanging, his head sunk and thrust forward. All little feelings passed away from her. She thought that her hour had come, and braced herself to meet it.

She was squarely in his path. She looked at him, spread her arms wide, and

said:

"Now kill me!"

Like lightning, Chako's clenched hands went over his head. He showed his gritting teeth, and she could hear the suck of his breath between them. She kept her eyes fixed on his.

The blow never descended. His arms dropped again, and with a groan he started running away from her—running back to-

ward their camp.

Ann remained standing in the same spot, all wrought up and exalted. She supposed he had gone to get his gun. It was only two hundred yards or so back to their camp; but the moments passed, and she did not hear him coming back. The exaltation of her spirit slowly failed her, and her broken body reasserted its claim. She sank down on the rocky floor again, trem-

bling, her breast bursting with pent-up sobs.

Once the first sob escaped her, every vestige of self-control failed her. She lay shaken and praying that Chako might come

quickly and end it.

Gradually the conviction was forced on her that he was not coming back. She was too much exhausted now to care whether he did or not. She was incapable of going to look for him. She lay inert where she was.

The passage of the hours signified nothing to her. Her teeth chattered, but what was cold? If she had any conscious impulse, it was to drag herself to the lip of the cañon, and drop over; but she lacked the energy of mind to carry it into effect.

XXVI

It was a cloudy dawn. In the first half hour of day, when the world is like a gray ghost of itself, Ann dragged herself to her feet, and started stumbling back toward the camp. Body and soul, she felt completely numb—a woman as good as dead, reluctantly forced on by a pair of alien legs.

From the canon rose the crashing of the waters undiminished. In fair weather and foul, until the earth itself perished, that futile uproar was bound to go on. There seemed to be a mirthful undercurrent in its bellowing that caused Ann to shudder.

She picked her way down over the broken rocks. Her bare feet were bruised and cut, but that was the least of her troubles. As she approached the trees, she saw that Chako was not there. His bed and his gun were gone.

Instantly she was attacked by a wild terror that showed she was not dead yet. There were still new torments to be undergone. To be abandoned there in the empty land! Her heart stood still at the terrible

prospect.

She ran wildly this way and that among the trees, crying for him, well knowing how useless it was. He had gone and taken his things—his bed, his gun, his ax. Only her bed and her boots were lying there, and some utensils by the fire.

In her panic she overlooked what must otherwise instantly have caught her attention—a scrap of rag pinned with a knife to the tree above her bed. Before she saw this, she had experienced a whole lifetime

of agony in a few moments.

She flew to it. On it was scribbled a message of three words:

Cross the portage.

Ann quieted down. Evidently he was waiting for her on the other side. She immediately set about preparing to follow.

There was bread left from the night before. She forced herself to eat some of it, though it choked her. With pain and difficulty she succeeded in pulling on her boots. She rolled her bed into as compact a bundle as possible, and slung it across her back. Frying pan and cooking pot she carried in her hand.

She set forth. She would scarcely have been able to follow that dim trail unaided, but as soon as she started she discovered that Chako, preceding her, had blazed a tree with his ax every ten feet or so. She was enormously comforted by this. He was certainly waiting for her, she thought, and for a mile or so she scarcely felt the pain in her feet.

The portage was five miles long and very rough. To the broken Ann each mile seemed twice as long as the mile before it. The remembered landmarks appeared more and more slowly. She had no food except a little more of the stale bread, which she could not force down without water, and she had forgotten to bring water.

The last mile of all was simply interminable. It seemed to Ann that she must have used the whole day in her passage; yet when she got to the cliff that marked the other side, the sun was still low in the sky. She had not been more than two

hours on the way.

She went down through that curious fissure in the rock with a cold hand on her breast, thinking of the bears that frequented the place. From the foot of the cliff it was only fifty yards or so to the embarking place on the river. She covered it with her heart in her mouth. She was not at all sure, now, that she would find Chako waiting.

She burst through the last trees with eyes straining. A glance showed her that he was not there—that there was nothing of his there. She sank down, covering her head with her arms to shut out the sight of that emptiness that must be faced alone.

Chako was gone, but there were fresh evidences of his handiwork here. Floating in the backwater, fastened by a line to a tree, was a little raft made of four logs lashed to two crosspieces, with a floor of poles on top. On it was placed the grub box that they had cached in this place, and alongside the grub box lay a paddle. Searching among these things, Ann found another scrap of rag under the paddle, with a similar laconic message scribbled on it:

Float down to Hairy Tom's camp.

Ann could not weep. The source of her tears was dried up. She sat down on the shore with a stony air. How characteristic of Chako was that brief, cruel message! So he had abandoned her! True, he had taken what measures he could to insure her safety, but he had abandoned her.

She tried to be fair. What else could she expect of him, having destroyed what was dearest to him in the world? In his own eyes he had every excuse for aban-

doning her.

In her lowest depths, however, Ann never regretted what she had done to the gold. A certain feeling of righteousness upheld her. Ah, but the grinding ache in her breast!

It occurred to her that Chako could not long have finished making that raft. Having prepared everything for her departure, it was possible that he might be keeping himself out of sight somewhere near. She threw back her head and called:

"Chako! Chako! Chako!"

Her voice was mockingly tossed back to her from the yellow cliffs.

Perhaps, if she waited there all day, he would come back; but it did not seem likely. If she waited, and he did not come, she would be forced to spend the night completely cut off from her kind. At that thought the nameless terror gripped Ann's breast. She had her own courage, but it was not that sort of courage. At the mere thought of the creeping silence of twilight she began to shake.

She knew she was something less than fifty miles above the Grand Forks, where Hairy Tom, the queer solitary, had pitched his tent. There was a swift current the whole way. It was scarcely more than eight o'clock now, and if she started at once she was bound to arrive before dark.

There were rapids in the Stanley River, but deep rapids. So long as she kept in the center of the stream, no harm could come to her, beyond a wetting. The logs of her little raft were cunningly and stoutly lashed with a thin, strong tracking line.

If she wished to arrive before dark, she must start at once. It was agonizing to have to leave that spot, believing Chako to be near, yet her fears drove her—her fears, and perhaps her common sense. She could not help her blind, instinctive yearning for Chako, but common sense told her that she must tear him out of her breast, and the sooner the better for her peace of mind.

She put a foot on the raft, and drew it back again. She walked up and down the shore, on the rack of indecision. Common sense told her that the wild Chako, having taken to flight, would never allow himself to be caught. There were a hundred good reasons why she should go; but it was none the less hard.

e

C

d

d

it

-

T

t

0

····t

t

S

t

e

e

1

1

Her attention was caught by a little green object lazily circling in an eddy of the backwater. With amazement she recognized it as a splintered fragment of the gunwale of Chako's canoe. The ends of the wood were ground into fibers. It was significant of what had happened in the cañon. By what irony of fate had it been cast up almost at her feet? Chako had probably seen it. How it would enrage him!

Finally, with a groan, Ann untied the rope, threw her bed on the raft, and stepped after it. Refusing to think any longer, she caught up the paddle and desperately drove her unwieldy craft out into the swift current.

Once the current gripped it, the die was cast. On a raft one could not go back upstream.

The sun was low when she came in sight of the wide expanse of sand that marked the meeting of the rivers. Hairy Tom's brown tent was pitched in the middle of it, and the old man himself was visible, a tiny black figure, in front of the tent. He must have seen Ann as soon as she saw him, for he stood there motionless while she was drawing near, his face turned toward her.

The Rice River had now fallen, while the Stanley almost filled its banks. Consequently the Stanley held possession of the channel, and Ann, borne on its triumphant flood, was in danger of being carried right by the sand bank where she wished to land.

Hairy Tom ran to the water's edge and shouted instructions, which she could not hear. He started to launch his canoe, in order to come to her assistance, but Ann finally succeeded in driving her stubborn craft from the flowing water into the standing water, almost rolling under in the impact. A few minutes later she grounded on the sand.

The old man was unchanged, with his neatly combed locks hanging to his shoulders, and his rusty cutaway coat pinned across at the neck. He was evidently delighted to see her, but his eyes were big with astonishment.

"Where's Chako?" he demanded.

" Back there," said Ann.

Ann had foreseen questions, of course. What had happened she regarded as no-body's business but hers and Chako's. Still, she knew something must be told, to forestall the marvelous and lying stories that would otherwise be set in circulation. She had resolved to tell as little as possible.

"Do you mean he's dead?" asked Hairy

Tom solicitously.

"No," said Ann. "We had a bad time. We lost our canoe in the cañon."

"But why did he let you come down

alone?"

"It was my own wish," said Ann evasively. "No doubt he will follow before very long."

"You quarreled?" said Hairy Tom.
Ann was silent. Useless to deny that!
The old man looked upon her silence as
a sufficient answer.

"Sho!" he said regretfully. "Chako is a skittish colt, but I didn't think he'd quarrel with you. Has he got grub?"

rel with you. Has he got grub?"
"He cannot have much," said Ann.
"But he has his gun, his ax, his bed?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then he'll be all right," said Hairy Tom confidently. "You couldn't down Chako in this country. He's as clever as a fox."

How this comforted Ann! She hid her face from the old man, lest he should see too much.

"Where did you leave him?" asked Hairy Tom.

"At the mouth of the Ouananeca

cañon," replied Ann.

"Well, if he don't come down within a day or two, I'll paddle up and have a look," said Hairy Tom. "He'd have a time to quarrel with me!" he added, with a chuckle. "I'm the amiablest man north of fifty-three."

Ann's heart was very soft and warm toward the old man. "But here we stand talking," cried Hairy Tom, "and I'll bet you're clean tuckered out! You look it. Sit ye down! Sit ye down! I'll have some grub directly. I was just about to get my supper when I see you come floatin' down river like a little water spider."

Ann sat down at the door of the tent, while the old man busied himself making

a fire.

"You come just right," he said. "I have a nice fish that I took on a night line this morning. All day I kep' it fresh in

the cold water."

During the preparation of the meal, and while they ate, Tom maintained the flow of his friendly chatter. It was exactly what the numbed Ann needed—human speech, friendly, thoughtless small talk. She had forgotten how sweet it was to the ear. Chako had had so little to say, and what he said was so charged with significance for her; but with the old man she could relax.

While he talked, the tears rolled down Ann's cheeks. He pretended not to notice

them.

"I tell you it give me a turn when I see you comin' down the river all alone! First off I couldn't see the raft at all, but just little you, sitting on the water, like. Such a little thing all alone on the river! A woman, too! In all my years up north I never seen the like."

He wanted to know all about his friend Joe Grouser, and Ann told him, suppressing, however, all mention of the gold.

"So Joe's gone!" he said. "Well, well! It was a good end, now. It makes an old man thoughtful. I was a lot older than Joe, and my end will not be long put off."

By and by Ann asked him anxiously how

she could get on from there.

"Oh, there's always some way," said Hairy Tom cheerfully. "If need be, I could paddle you down to the Rocky Mountain portage, put you across, and build you a raft on the other side. Then you could float down to one of the posts in Athabasca; but I reckon you'd rather go out to Fort Edward, where you started from."

Ann nodded.

"Well, as it happens, Frank Bower will be coming up from the portage any day now. Bower is the feller that come down the Rice River just a day or so ahead of you. He had a scow load of supplies for the surveying party in the cañon down there. Soon as he delivered it, he was going back light in a canoe. I looked for him before this, but of course, his season's work being done, he's nachelly takin' things easy."

"Do you think he'll have room for me?"

asked Ann.

"Sure! He's got a twenty-foot dugout, and only a breed boy to help him paddle. A good tripper, Bower is, too—one of the best. You'll be safe with him. A good-hearted man, too—not like Chako."

In spite of herself, Ann could not let this pass. "Chako's all right," she said. "It

was my fault that we quarreled."

He looked at her queerly.

"Chako quarrels with everybody," he said.

"I don't care!" said Ann. "I have no complaint against him."

The old man looked away, and hummed a few bars between his teeth. He did not mean to be rude. It was merely that he required a moment or two to adjust himself to this situation.

He was soon launched in his stride again. It appeared that this Bower was quite a hero of his. He had tales of Bower's prowess in the big rapids of the Spirit, and

in the deep snows.

"He's a humorous feller, too," Hairy Tom went on. "Me and him has always got to have our joke. When he come up this time, he said he was goin' to kidnap me and carry me outside and get my hair cut!"

To the simple old man this was the richest joke in the world. He laughed until the

tears stood in his eyes.

Like all men who live much alone, Hairy Tom was a philosopher in his innocent

style.

"I ain't been out in twenty-five years," he said. "They tell me there's great changes, what with the automobiles, the flying machines, and all. They say you can shoot messages through the air, now, without any wires. I like to hear the fellows talk, but I don't believe the half of it. I ain't curious to see these new things. No, I'm too old for changes. What I like about this country is, it never changes. This is my life. I always used to plan to go out at last when I got ready to die, but law, I guess dyin's much the same one place as another. Seems like it wouldn't be stickin' by the land if I carried my old bones out-

side; so I'll die on the ground I've slep'

on nigh fifty years."

99

t,

ie

1-

[t

e

0

Hairy Tom insisted on Ann's taking his tent, while he slept under his canoe. She lay comforted by the sense of his nearness. The queer old fellow was both kindred and kind. She breathed a little prayer of thankfulness for such a friend.

All the tears Ann had not been able to shed before, flowed now. Her heart was desolated; but the hard, desperate numbness was gone. Her heart might be broken, but it was a human heartbreak. At least she felt herself human again, and in a world of her own kind.

XXVII

On the second morning following, Ann was baking bread in front of the tent when she was thrilled by an excited cry from Hairy Tom, who had gone down the shore to visit his night lines. Her eyes flew up the Stanley River, where her heart was, but there was nothing to be seen there. Coming up the Spirit River, however, was a little object creeping alongshore, which presently resolved itself into a dugout, with two men paddling it. A long-legged dog accompanied them, walking gravely along the shore.

"Frank Bower!" cried Hairy Tom.

Their progress was very slow against the current, and Ann had plenty of time to size up the outfit. She could see little of the man in the stern, however, because he was masked by the bow paddler, obviously a breed.

They paused opposite, to allow the dog to jump aboard, then came paddling over to the sand bank. In no little trepidation Ann awaited the stepping ashore of the man upon whom her present fate so largely

depended.

He proved to be a stalwart, upstanding Irishman, about forty years old, with red hair curling close to his head, and eyes as blue as the June sky. The first glance of those Irish eyes inspired Ann with confidence. She was in luck again!

A few words sufficed to explain her plight to Bower. His eyes warmed with compassion. He instantly adopted a solicitous and protective attitude, which under other circumstances Ann might have resented; but in her present forlorn state it comforted her.

Bower did not have to be asked to take her to Fort Edward. He took it for granted that she was to go with him. He even proposed to drown the unfortunate, harmless mongrel, that she might not be discommoded by the dog's presence in the dugout; but Ann quickly vetoed that. When she tried to suggest paying him for the trip, the man was deeply hurt and angry, and she had much ado to smooth him down.

Ann had not been long enough in the north to become accustomed to the effect that the sight of her wrought in the breast of a lonely man. Hairy Tom, primming up his lips, and making queer old-man faces, saw what was going to happen.

They ate a meal on the shore. Bower strongly commended Ann's baking, which, to tell the truth, was not up to her standard. His eyes brooded on her continually. Pain is apt to make one selfish; and Ann, having made up her mind that she could trust Bower, gave little thought to him. Hairy Tom was frankly impatient with her, or with Bower, or with both of them. At any rate, he was not getting the pleasure out of Bower's visit that he had looked forward to.

Immediately after they had finished, Bower said he must push on in order to make a certain camping spot that night. Old Tom was as disappointed as a child. He considered this a mere excuse of Bower's to get Ann to himself. He pished and pshawed and shrugged, as much as to say that he washed his hands of them both.

Bower would not hear of Ann's wielding a paddle. He constructed a nest of blankets for her amidships, facing him. He handed her in like a princess. How different from her other traveling companion! Ann thought of this, but her heart did not soften toward Bower as much as it might have done.

With repeated farewells and many last messages, they pushed off. Hairy Tom accompanied them, walking along the edge of the sand, until he was stopped by a little tributary which came in on that side. They left him standing there, rather a piteous figure, with his gray hair blowing in the wind and a slightly resentful expression on his face, like a child who has been left out of it.

"Are you quite comfortable?" asked Bower anxiously.

"Oh, yes," said Ann. "I'm not accustomed to this. I feel that I ought to be doing my part."

"With two men aboard to paddle for you?" said Bower, a little shocked.

"I'm afraid you have old-fashioned ideas about women," observed Ann, smiling.

"Well, I think you're an old-fashioned sort of girl," said Bower acutely.

Ann shrugged.

"I can't abide new women or new ideas about women," declared Bower. "The old ideas of working for them and fighting for

them are good enough for me!"

Ann ought to have thanked God for sending such a man in her extremity, but instead she found herself resenting every stroke of the paddles that drove her a little farther from the place where she had left her heart.

That slab-sided little steamboat, the Tewkesbury L. Swett, with her crooked smokestack and her wheezing engine, was being borne down on the current of the Campbell River at what seemed a surprising speed for a craft of her crazy build; but it was the river that was doing the work. As Captain Wes Trickett was fond of saying, she had to hump herself to keep ahead of it.

Out on the deck, forward of the shed, Frank Bower and Ann, the only two passengers, were sitting on camp stools. Ann

had the capstan at her back.

Twelve days of tripping together had considerably relaxed their attitude toward each other. There was now a comfortable suggestion of custom and confidence in it. They were able to be silent together without constraint. Bower had lost a good deal of his old-fashioned gallantry, but had gained something truer and deeper. The soul of the man looked out of his eyes when they rested on Ann. Ann's face was pale and downcast.

Bower broke a long silence to say:

"We'll be at Fort Edward in about an hour. I suppose you won't be sorry to get there!"

"Nor glad, either," said Ann.

"The steamboat will lie there overnight," Bower went on. "To-morrow she goes down to Ching's Landing, to connect with the stage." He hesitated with a painful air, and finally blurted out: "Will you be going down on her?"

"I don't know," said Ann in a torment-

ed voice. "I suppose I ought."

He looked at her solicitously, but was unable to find the right words to speak. There was a long silence. At length he

said in a low, moved voice:

"This has been a wonderful trip to me, this last twelve days. I can scarcely believe that such luck fell to me-to be able to look at you all day long, and talk to you. You cannot know what it means to a man who never before had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with a lady.

"I am not a lady," said Ann, with a wry

"You are what I call a lady," he said gravely. "Paddling upstream has never seemed such light work before, nor the little lakes so pretty. You pointed out new beauties to me that I had never seen, often as I have gone that way. The only thing that troubled my happiness was that you were not at ease in your mind. I wish I could have changed that!"

Another silence.

"It has changed everything in my life," Bower went on. "I see the meaning of things I used to mock at."

"Oh, don't!" murmured Ann.

"Let me talk," he said with a grin. "All my life I've been bottled up, sort of. It 'll do me good. Oh, I haven't any false hopes!"

She made no further effort to restrain

him.

"I suppose this is what they call love," he said with a confused air. "I never expected to speak that word. I never expected it to come to me-and so I made out to mock at it. That was one of the things I've always mocked at; so I can't speak the language properly now. But it's true—I love you!"

"Oh!" murmured Ann. "I have suffered too much myself to wish to make others suffer unnecessarily. If only this

had not happened!"

"Bless your heart!" he said with his grin. "It isn't going to do me any harm! It 'll make a man of me, if anything will." His courage failed him in the act of vaunting it. His head went down. After a while he said, timidly and longingly: "Of course you couldn't marry a man like me-"

"No," Ann replied gently. He took her up quickly.

"Of course not. It's not to be expected; but you see I had to ask you before you went away. I was so scared to ask you that if I hadn't done it, it would have made me out a coward to myself."

"If I only could!" said Ann.

e

le

to

to

a

w

n

g

11

11

e

n

93

0

e

"That's all right! That's all right!" he told her, much flustered. "I understood all along I wasn't good enough."

"Far too good," said Ann. "When I think of your kindness and gentleness to me, day after day, it is almost more than I can bear to have to hurt you now!"

"But you mustn't think of it that way. You must think of the benefit you conferred on me." While his tongue spoke what he considered the proper thing, his confused and longing eyes pleaded in a language of their own. Finally he said, in honest tones of pain: "You say you can't marry me. Well, will you tell me why you can't?"

"I do not love you."

"I know; but even so—" He struggled with what he thought ought not to be spoken, but it would have way. "Oh, I know I ought not to ask you, but I can't help myself. It means such a hell of a lot to me!"

"You can ask me anything you want,"

said Ann simply.

Bower looked straight ahead of him with a red and tormented face. His tongue stumbled on.

"Well, the most natural explanation of what happened up there is—is that Chako took advantage of you—that he mistreated you. My God, that wouldn't be your fault! Is that why you think you can't marry me?"

"No," said Ann. "There is no truth

in that."

Bower let his head fall.

"Oh!" he said, in a flat tone. "I didn't want to insult you."

"I am not insulted," replied Ann

quickly.

"I almost wish it was true!" he went on.
"Don't misunderstand me. You see, that
would be something that I could make up
to you, rude as I am. I wanted you to
know that it wouldn't make any difference
in my feelings for you if it was true—
though I'd kill him for it!"

"It is not true," said Ann. "Look at

me. You must believe that."

He refused to look at her.

"Oh, I believe you," he muttered with hanging head. "Then I guess the reason you won't marry me must be because you have a fancy for—for—well, for somebody else."

"Yes," said Ann.

"I'll say no more," said Bower. "You know you can always count on me."

XXVIII

THE arrival of the steamboat from up the river was not a matter of great moment in the settlement, and only half a dozen or so of the inveterate loafers were attracted to the bank to see her make fast. These few received a shock when they saw Ann step ashore under conduct of Frank Bower. Their faces confessed it. Nobody needed to be told that there was a story behind this. It promised a sensation greater that any that had transpired at Fort Edward that season.

As soon as Ann and Bower set off along the road, the onlookers scattered to spread the news. The school-teacher was back, not with Chako Lyllac, but with Frank

Bower!

The settlement was unchanged. Two or three more of the appallingly ugly yellow pine shacks had been run up, that was all. The mud, the stumps, the old log buildings, and the new ones of sawn lumber,

were just the same.

The place sickened Ann a little with the painful old feelings it stirred up. Out of that shack Chako had run with blazing, laughing eyes in pursuit of the little squeaking man in the store suit. In this store, while Chako bought groceries at one counter, she bought clothes at another, thrilling with a marvelous secret. Years seemed to have passed over her head since she had left Fort Edward. Then she had been a green girl; now she was a woman with life behind her.

On the platform in front of Maroney's the usual little crowd was loitering. One and all, they turned and stared at Ann as at

a phenomenon from the skies.

"The damned rubbernecks!" muttered Bower.

Cal Nimmo was not among them. Inside the hotel the newcomers ran into Noll Voss. His jaw dropped. He stared at Ann with a sickly hatred, and sidled out of the door.

Maroney, with his upstanding pompadour and his greasy smile, appeared from somewhere. Stepping behind the rough desk, he shoved the dog's-eared register toward the two newcomers.

"One room or two?" he asked slyly.

Bower's face turned crimson.

"Two rooms, damn you!" he replied.

"And if I hear another word of that sort-"

"Well, no offense," said Maroney impudently, feeling safe in his own house.

Ann was not at all sensitive to these evidences of her changed status in the settlement. What did it matter?

Maroney showed her upstairs to the room she had had before. She greatly desired to know if Nellie Nairns was still in the house, but did not like to ask him, for fear of provoking an insolent answer.

After he had put her in her room, he presently returned, and shoved her old suit case inside the door. Ann opened it with a queer sort of sensation that she would find her old self inside; but it was only the husk of her old self, the woman's dress. What was the use of changing her outer garments? She would not get that old self back again.

She sat down by the window, where she had looked out so often, and listened. At present all her faculties were turned inward. Some time before morning she had to come to a decision. Within her, com-

mon sense was vocal.

"You must go to-morrow," it told her. "The incident is closed. Why prolong the agony? The only thing for you to do is to go to work and forget. You staked everything on Chako. Well, you lost! Face it! Don't be a bad loser. To hang around where you're not wanted would only open the way for unbearable humiliations."

So much for common sense. On the other hand, her instincts were not articulate, but they exerted a terrible pull. All the good reasons in the world made no difference. Feeling that pull, Ann cried in

pain:

"I can't leave here! I can't! I can't!"
By and by Maroney banged rudely on
her door, and called out that Cal Nimmo
wanted to see her downstairs.

"Even if I should stay, I can't stay in this house," Ann thought. "This man is bent on making it impossible for me."

She went downstairs with mixed feelings. She liked Cal Nimmo, his tough-mindedness, his candor. She desired him for a friend; but she had defied him in going north, and now she expected to have to face his anger.

He was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. To her relief, he was not angry, but greeted her with just the old, hard,

skeptical, kindly grin.

"Howdy? Howdy?" he cried, offering her an enormous paw.

Ann understood, with gratitude, that by this public recognition Cal Nimmo was definitely putting his personal influence at her service.

When he got a good look at Ann, his face changed a little. He pulled his nose and scowled. One would almost have said that compassion appeared in that grim and battered physiognomy.

"Where can we go for a bit of a talk?" he grumbled. "I swear you've got them all jumping with excitement like beans in

the pot!"

"Let's go into the dance hall and sit at a table by ourselves," suggested Ann.

"All right!" said Cal, with a broader grin. "Can't hurt you now that you've lost your reputation!"

Ann laughed. There was something so sane about Cal. He had a way of making

things seem not so desperate.

The dance hall was fairly well filled, but the atmosphere was stodgy. The men and the girls sat around in listless attitudes. All the zip seemed to have departed from the place.

"Nellie Nairns has gone," remarked

Ann.

Cal nodded.

"Yes, Nell cut about all the hay there was in Fort Edward, and went in search of fresh pastures."

They sat at a table a little apart from other people, and looked at each other afresh.

"I'm glad you're willing to be friends," said Ann, with a wry smile. "I hardly expected it."

Cal wagged his raised hand, as much as

to say:

"No use bringing up the past!" A silence fell between them.

"Well, why don't you question me?"
Ann asked at last.

"I've already learned from Bower what you told him," said Cal coolly. "I don't reckon you'd tell me any more."

Ann let it go at that. Another silence ensued. Then Cal asked, with his admirable directness:

"Why don't you marry some other man

—naming no names?"

Ann had the comfortable feeling that she could be absolutely honest in dealing with this man, even though he might be opposed to her.

"That's one way out," she replied, as coolly as himself; "but I think I'd rather teach school."

"No doubt you're right," said Cal. "I only mentioned it because it's what most women would do under the circumstances." He added significantly: "The steamboat goes down the river to-morrow—"

Ann interrupted him.

"Oh, don't let's get started on that again!" she said. "I know all you can say. I know I ought to go. The question is, can I bring myself to it?"

"Well," said Cal dryly, "if I think you ought to go, and you think you ought to go, it might be the part of true friendship to

make you go."

Ann shook her head impatiently.

"What would prevent me from coming right back on the boat! No, if any good is to come of it, I must persuade myself

to go."

ıt

e

d

99

m

n

ıt

re

g

ıt

d

s. m

d

n

IS

99

ıt

n

"That's pretty fine-drawn for me," said Cal scornfully. "Look here! Let me give you a few plain-spoken reasons. Nellie Nairns is gone, and the fellows here are bored. When a gang of men gets in that condition, anything devilish can happen. As long as they believed you were a respectable woman, you were pretty safe from them; but they're only ordinary men. They have their own explanation as to why you went north with Chako Lyllac and came back with Frank Bower, and there's no budging them from it. According to their notions, you're fair game now. I put it blunt. The only way you could keep the gang off would be by accepting one of them as a protector."

Ann shuddered.

"If only I knew that Chako was safe!"

she murmured.

"Fudge!" said Cal, with brutal friendliness.

"That's only an excuse. If you knew he was safe, you'd be more unwilling

than ever to go."

Ann hung her head.

"I assure you Chako's perfectly safe," said Cal calmly. "If I didn't think so, I wouldn't be sitting quietly in camp. Nothing could kill Chako short of an avalanche; and he isn't in the mountains."

Ann's eyes shone on Cal. It made him uneasy. He raised his voice a little.

"Let me put it to you even more plain. You might think, from the way Maroney received you, that I had given him a tip not to take you in, as I once threatened to do.

That is not so. I never spoke to him about you. It is something quite different that is biting Maroney. Why does he act as if his house was too good for you, you may ask, and him keeping these girls here, who are certainly not lilies? Do you know why?"

Ann shook her head.

"Well, I'll tell you. Maroney collects a percentage of these girls' earnings. He is naturally sore about you. I see I don't have to go on."

Ann's head was low.

"Oh, I must go!" she groaned. "Don't say any more to me now. Let me fight it out!"

The hard-headed old mayor of Fort Edward was guilty of a shameful softness.

"Sure, sure!" he murmured, and touched Ann's hand. Then he looked around in alarm, to see if anybody had noticed it. He raised his voice. "Lord, this joint is like a Quaker meeting. Let's get out!"

They left.

XXIX

In the morning Ann resumed her woman's dress and packed her suit case. She breakfasted in the hotel without speaking to anybody, and paid her bill to the sneering Maroney. The steamboat was announced to leave "some time or other in the forenoon," and she made up her mind she might as well wait on board as anywhere else. She could screen herself from observation within the deck house. She set out.

Cal Nimmo was out on the platform. He came toward her with hand outstretched for the suit case. Ann drew it back.

"Please do not come with me," she murmured. "I know you are my friend. I shall not forget you; but—but I would rather be alone."

"That's all right," said Cal quickly. He was not grinning. He lowered his voice. "I wish you luck, my girl," he said deeply. "If it's any consolation to you, I think you are a corker. Chako Lyllac is a darned fool!"

They shook hands, and Ann hurried on alone.

She presently perceived that she was overtaking a group of men bound in the same direction, and moderated her pace. A second glance showed her that Frank Bower was among them, and her heart sank. Frank had bought a new store suit,

which clung queerly to the bulges of his stalwart frame, and he was carrying a new suit case of imitation leather. The spirit was steadfast, but the flesh was weak, and he simply could not resist the opportunity of being with Ann day by day during the long river journey.

Ann stopped and stared sightlessly in a store window. The crafty, instinctive part of us is always on the watch to take an unfair advantage. The instinctive part of Ann used poor Bower's going as an excuse to start a new fight, dead beat as she

was from fighting all night.

Because she didn't want to go, the fact that Bower was going rendered the trip well-nigh insupportable to her. How could she endure it, she asked herself, when Bower was so gentle, so chivalrous, glowing with such a deep and repressed passion—in a word, all that she longed for in another man? She told herself that she could not bear to hurt him day by day, but it was perhaps nearer the truth that she herself could not bear the implied contrast between Bower and Chako.

Cal Nimmo's suggestion recurred to her, too. Suppose that in a moment of weakness she took what she could get. Would she not regret it all the rest of her life?

As Ann stood there in inner confusion, her attention was caught by a woman who entered the store—a buxom, pleasant-faced young woman whom Ann had not seen before. "Young wife" was written large upon her. Ann recollected that a little way up the Campbell River there was a settlement of married people, which she had never visited. The woman's look of happiness and serenity made her a little sick with envy.

Without thinking what she was doing, Ann followed the woman into the store. Ann bought some handkerchiefs she did not want, while she watched the other covertly. The young wife was well acquainted with everybody in the store. She looked so jolly

and kind!

When she went out, Ann hurried after her, wholly in the grip of her instincts now. She overtook the woman.

"Excuse me," she stammered. "I-I

suppose you live here."

"Why, yes—up the river a little piece," said the woman, smiling. "Who are you?" Her face suddenly changed. "Why, you must be—"

"Ann Maury," whispered Ann.

A curious mixture of feelings was to be seen in the woman's face—a strong curiosity, a formal disapproval, and a very informal sympathy. It was this last sparkle in her eyes that gave Ann courage to go on.

"I'm afraid you've been hearing stories

about me," she faltered.

The woman laughed in an embarrassed

"Well, they have been talking," she said: "but I don't believe all I hear."

"Do I look like a bad one to you?" asked Ann.

"No," said the other promptly. "That's what I can't understand. What did you speak to me for?"

"I don't dare tell you now," replied Ann

in a low voice.

"Oh, go on!" said the woman. "There's

nothing stand-offish about me."

"Well, I was on my way to take the steamboat," said Ann, "because I can't stay at the hotel. The men there—"

"I get you," said the woman dryly.

"I don't want to go out on this trip,"
Ann went on; "because—because"—she snatched at the first lie that presented itself—"because I'm expecting an important letter in the next mail. Then I saw you, and you looked so nice that I couldn't help speaking to you. I thought perhaps you would take me in for two weeks. Of course, I would pay you the same that I paid at Maroney's."

The woman looked Ann up and down,

and bit her lip reflectively.

"I don't know," she said. "We live

pretty rough up here."

"Ah, what is that?" said Ann. "I've been sleeping on the ground for the last six weeks."

"Yes, I know," said the woman dryly.
"We have a spare loft in our shack, but
you'd have to go up and down on a ladder."

"I wouldn't mind that," declared Ann

eagerly.

"I wouldn't mind having you," said the woman. "You don't look as if you'd bite me, and it would be company; but I'm thinking my husband would cut up rough. He's a moral man," she added with an engaging grin.

"Perhaps if he could see me-" ven-

tured Ann.

"He has seen vou."

"Couldn't we go talk to him?"

"That wouldn't do any good. He'd feel obliged to take a moral stand if you put it

to him." The woman considered a while. "Come on!" she said at last. "I'll take a chance. He won't be home till night, and the boat will be gone then. I can talk him around."

Ann's strained, white face softened and beamed. All her unregenerate instincts rejoiced because, after all, she had won out

against common sense.

They proceeded to get acquainted as they walked on. It appeared that the name of Ann's new friend was Mrs. Cranmer. Her husband was Ed Cranmer, one of the proprietors of the store they had just left. She had a baby. Mrs. Cranmer insisted on carrying Ann's suit case part way, and Ann took her bundles.

Their path led them within a hundred feet of the spot where the steamboat was tied to the bank. Only her pilot house and her crooked stack showed above. She was getting up steam, and light wood smoke

was floating from the stack.

The usual little crowd of men was standing about and sitting on the lumber. When Frank Bower saw Ann passing by, the other woman carrying her suit case, his honest face took on a comical expression of surprise and chagrin. Ann saw at once that he would never leave that day.

The Cranmer dwelling faced the river. It was of somewhat greater pretensions than its neighbors, having a porch in front and a dormer window in the roof. The Cranmers called it a bungalow. Like all the other shacks, it was built of rough-

dressed pine, guiltless of paint.

Inside, partitions of the same rough boards divided the rooms. The furniture was of the scantiest description. Nevertheless, it was a woman's house, and Ann was sensible of a new atmosphere as soon as she entered the door.

The rosy eight-months-old baby blinded Ann to everything else. At the sight of him bouncing and crowing in the breed girl's arms, imperatively holding out his little arms for a white woman to take him, Ann melted like wax before the fire.

"Oh, let me hold him!" she cried.

She took the soft, wriggling little body in her arms, and walked up and down with the tears falling fast. The baby knew he had found a friend, and clung to her with a will. That the women might not see her tears, Ann went out on the porch, where she sat rocking and crooning and weeping, easing her hungry heart.

From that moment Mrs. Cranmer was Ann's friend and ally. They spent a comfortable day together. Ann told her new friend a little more than she had told Bower, but not much more. Mrs. Cranmer guessed more than Ann told her, and Ann did not mind having her know.

Just before midday they heard the piping whistle that announced the departure

of the steamboat.

"Well, that's settled!" said Mrs. Cran-

mer, with a laugh.

Ed Cranmer came home to his supper with a sour face. He was a typical grocer's clerk, who only looked himself behind an apron. He already knew of Ann's meeting with his wife. Ann took herself out of the way while husband and wife had it out together. When she returned, Ed's manner toward her was still grudging, but it seemed to be taken for granted that Ann was to stay.

During the meal Ed retailed the day's gossip for his wife's benefit. The only item that interested Ann was that Frank Bower, after carrying his grip down to the steamboat, had carried it back to Ma-

roney's again.

On the following afternoon the two women were seated in rocking-chairs on the little porch. Mrs. Cranmer was sewing, while Ann held the blessed baby. That baby was Ann's consolation and joy. The little form seemed to armor her breast against pain. When she held it, she knew peace again.

The Cranmer bungalow was built about a hundred feet back from the edge of the bank. A swath had been cut through the trees in front, and through this opening they looked out across the murky green flood, but could not see up or down the river.

There came a moment when conversation failed the two women. Ann was rocking slowly, thinking about nothing in particular, quietly recuperating her depleted forces. Suddenly, close to the shore, a light bark canoe shot into view, with Chako Lyllac paddling it.

Ann's heart stood still. Her peace and her new-found strength were shattered, and the old pain came winging back. She had forgotten it for the time being, and it dismayed her. It snatched her breath and sapped her courage. It seemed as if it must be more than her tired heart could

endure.

This was what she had been secretly waiting for, but she felt only terror. How could she go through it all again? What would she not have given at that moment to be safely bound out on the stage?

Chako's head was up, his smooth cheeks glowing, his whole figure instinct with wellbeing. Unaware of being observed, he showed them in the first moment the quick, open look of a natural creature, missing nothing and giving nothing away. Then he turned his head and saw Ann. Instantly he drew the hard mask over his face, and looked away with the defiant, hangdog air she knew so well. He was carried out of their sight.

Mrs. Cranmer, without saying anything, glanced slyly and compassionately at Ann. Ann got up, and, handing the baby to his mother, passed into the house and climbed

the ladder to her loft.

XXX

WHEN Ann heard Ed Cranmer come home to his supper, she was forced to go downstairs again. She dreaded having to face his sharp, mean glance, but she had to know what was going on in the settlement. And then, after all, Ed would not tell the day's news before her, though he was clearly bursting with it. The meal was a torture to Ann.

Afterward the three of them sat out on the porch, in a constrained silence. Ann knew very well that Ed wanted to talk to his wife, but she would not leave them. To be sure, she could get it all out of Mrs. Cranmer the next day, but she did not see how she could get through the night without knowing. Yet her tongue seemed to be frozen in her throat. She could not ask a question.

While Ann sat there so composedly, she

was inwardly torn by devils.

What would Chako do? Fly away back again, most likely, now that he knew she was still there. What could she do? Sit still until she learned that he had gone? Just sit still and do nothing? She would go mad!

But what could she do? It would be suicidal to go to the settlement after him. At the first suggestion of pursuit he would surely fly, if he had not already flown. Yet she knew that he would never come to her

of his own will.

While Ann was being harried by such thoughts, the form of Chako rose over the edge of the bank in front of her. For one dreadful moment she thought she had gone mad in truth. Like lightning, she glanced at her two companions; but they saw him too.

She searched his face with her very soul. His daytime freshness was somewhat rubbed. He had probably been drinking in the settlement—that was to be expected. He wore the same defiant, hangdog look; but it told Ann nothing, for she knew he used that look to cover all sorts of feelings.

He touched his hat brim.

"Evening, Ed. Evening, Mrs. Cranmer. Want to speak to Miss Maury a minute—matter of business."

Hearing those resonant tones, a little gruff with self-consciousness, Ann well-nigh swooned with delight. She accompanied Chako back to the edge of the bank, walking like a woman in a dream.

They stood there for a moment in silence. Chako, at a loss for words, scowled

like a pirate.

"Well, haven't you something to say to me?" he mumbled at last.

She looked at him blankly.

"What should I say?" she whispered.
"Well, you owe me some money, don't you?" he suggested with a hardy air.

"Oh!" said Ann, with a feeble laugh.
"Of course! I quite forgot. I'm so

sorry!"

Her tongue gabbled, while her senses were reeling. So it was the money he had come for! Of course!

"It's in the house," she stammered. "If—if you'll wait just a moment, I'll get

it for you."

She ran to the house. A strange need of haste drove her. Ed and his wife stared at her. Ann scrambled up the ladder, got the money, and came flying down again and out to Chako.

She thrust the roll of bills into his hands.

"Here!" she said. Inwardly she added:

"Go! Go! I can't bear any more!"

Chako had to count the roll. Ann waited with averted head, holding herself tight. "There's too much money here," he said sullenly.

"Three hundred was the amount agreed on," murmured Ann.

Her lips were stiff with repugnance at being forced to speak about money.

"But I didn't bring you all the way

"There is the canoe-"

"Ah, you can't pay for that!" he said harshly. "That's not the point. You've got to have money enough to get home on. What you paid Bower to bring you out has got to be taken out of this. How much did you pay Bower?"

"Nothing," said Ann. "What?" cried Chako.

"He wouldn't take anything."

Chako's face turned black.

"Oh, he wouldn't, wouldn't he? He was a nice, kind fellow, eh? Different from me, I suppose! He'd do everything you wanted him to! He'd let vou walk all over him!"

"Oh, go!" murmured Ann, sick at heart.

"You've got what you came for."

"Not till I get to the bottom of this!" Chako said, low and furiously. "Maybe you paid him some other way!"

Ann started back toward the house.

"By God, I'll pay him, then!" Chako shouted after her, and leaped down the bank to his canoe.

Ann went back with a dazed air, passed the staring Cranmers without speaking, and climbed to her little loft again. She stood under the peak of the low roof, staring blindly. At first she was simply dazed and sickened by his brutality. Then the feeling stirred within her that after all there was something worse than a man's brutality-that was his disregard. A crazy little thought of joy lifted up its head. Chako jealous!

She seized it and strangled it-strangled it and stamped on the corpse. He was only drunk, and ready to quarrel with anybody about nothing. There was not a spark of feeling for her in his breast. To allow herself to suppose that there was, was simply to prepare for another shock such as she had had that night; and another would certainly finish her.

As Ann and the Cranmers were sitting down to breakfast next morning, the open doorway of the bungalow was darkened by the tall figure of Cal Nimmo. Ann's heart leaped into her throat. She instantly understood that this visit had a portent for her.

"Morning, folks," said Cal affably.

"Got grub enough for another?"

Cal was decidedly a person to be propitiated in Fort Edward, and Ed Cranmer and his wife jumped up, with smiles, to draw up a chair and to set a place at the

table. Mrs. Cranmer helped him largely. Cal disposed of his viands handily, declined a second helping, sat back, and filled his pipe. Meanwhile Ann played with her untouched breakfast in a state of suspended animation.

Cal got his pipe going well.

"I really came to see Miss Maury," he said; "but I want you folks to hear what I've got to say. There's been so much damned nonsense passed around, it's time a little truth was put in circulation."

Ann's heart beat intolerably. She pushed

her plate away.

" Now don't get excited, sister," said Cal. "There's no call for it. Let me tell my story, and you'll see."

"Go on!" said Ed impatiently.

Cal's eyes twinkled derisively upon him. "Oh, it don't invalidate your overdue accounts, Ed. Last night Chako Lyllac was seen to set off up the river in his canoe. As he was back in half an hour or so, it was supposed that he had been here."

"He was here," said Ed.
"Ah! Well, he'd been drinking some before he came, and he drank some more when he came back. He went from bar to bar with that long-legged stride of his, like a lone moose, speaking to nobody. He came into Bagger's place. I was there, and a lot of other fellows were buttressing the drink counter. Frank Bower was there."

Ann half rose from her chair and dropped

back again.

"Easy, my girl!" said Cal. "There was no murder done. You all know what a peaceable fellow Big Frank is. Why, I can scarcely ever recollect when he got into a fight. He'll do anything to avoid a fight, and he's respected, just the same, because all men know his pluck and endurance on the trail. Well, Chako marches up to him and says:

"'I been lookin' for you.'

"'Well,' says Frank, 'I ain't been keepin' out of your way.'

" Chako ups and throws a little wad of

bills in Frank's face.

"'There's your pay!' he shouts. No-body knew what he was referrin' to. Nobody knows yet. 'And now you're paid I'm goin' to smash your face open!' Chako

"Some of us grabbed hold of Chako at that. When Chako gets drunk and raging, he's like a mad buffalo. Nothing can withstand him; and we thought Frank Bower

was too good a man to make meat for Chako. He's near twenty years older than Chako, anyhow; but Frank, he says, cool as you please:

"'Take your hands off me, men. This cub needs a lickin', and he's goin' to get it

at last!""

A groan was forced from Ann.

"Well, didn't he need a lickin'?" Cal flashed on her.

Ann hung her head.

"Go on! Go on!" Ed Cranmer said, beside himself.

"That's what you miss, stayin' home nights, Ed," drawled Cal.

However, Ann's imploring eyes caused

him to bestir himself with his tale.

"None of us thought Frank Bower had a show," the mayor continued. "We'd never seen Chako licked in a stand-up fight, and few of us had ever so much as seen Frank Bower put up his fists; but while Chako was still givin' him the rough edge of his tongue, Frank stepped up and stopped his mouth with a punch that astonished the young feller. Then they went to it. That scrap will be talked about in Fort Edward for years to come."

"How did it end?" murmured Ann,

clasping her hands.

But Cal refused to be cheated out of his

whole tale.

"Chako was at a disadvantage," he went on. "He was too mad. Always, before this, he went into a scrap with a don't-give-a-damn look that had his man half licked before they begun. This time he was mad—so mad he couldn't see good. Bower was mad too, but it was a different kind of mad; and I tell you we men got the surprise of our lives when we saw Chako measuring his long length on the floor!"

"Was that the end?" cried Ann.

"No, the beginning," said Cal dryly.
"Chako was game, of course—game to the marrow. A man shows his true mettle in a losing fight, and I was proud of the boy.
Chako came back again and again. When he could no longer see to place his own blows, he still stood up without flinching, and took Bower's."

"I can't stand any more!" cried Ann.

"How did it end?"

"It ended when I ended it," said Cal simply. "Chako would never have cried quits while there was still a beat in his heart. He was so far gone, though, that he was mighty glad when I stopped it. He was licked, all right. Another fellow and me took him home to my place, and there he is still."

Ann involuntarily rose from her chair. "Where you goin'?" drawled Cal.

"I must—I must—" she stammered.
"I wouldn't " interrupted Cal. " Che

"I wouldn't," interrupted Cal. "Chako's beauty isn't permanently spoiled, but this morning he's not pretty to look at."

"What do I care for that?" cried Ann.

Cal dropped the facetious air.

"Sit down, my girl," he said firmly.

Ann obeyed.

"Do you want to spoil his cure?" Cal went on. "I feel toward Chako as I would toward my own son, if I had one; and I tell you this is all for the good of his soul. Leave him to his meditations for a while. Sympathy! My God, it would be all to do over again! I tell you the lad is lucky, being in the wrong, to get so thoroughly licked. It will give him a properer notion of life. No man is a complete man until he has been well licked at least once."

Ann said no more.

"You don't ask me anything about Bower?" said Cal slyly.

Ann looked her question.

"After I put Chako to bed, I come back to Bagger's," said Cal. "Me and Bower went away by ourselves and had a talk. There's a man!"

"What did he tell you?" asked Ed Cran-

mer eagerly.

"Well, you see, Ed, it was to me he told it," drawled Cal. "In confidence like. I may say this, though—Bower knew exactly what he was doing."

"How do you mean?"

"He set out to knock the devil out of Chako, knowing that Chako's gain would be his loss."

"I don't understand you."

"There's one as understands," said Cal.
"That's all Bower cared about."

"Where's Bower now?"

"I lent him a dugout that was left with me by a fellow that went out for the summer. Bower's gone back up river in her. Must have passed here about midnight."

Cal got up to go. Ann understood from his glance that he had a word for her in private, and she went with him out on the

porch. Cal took her hand.

"Listen, sister," he said. "You ought to know by this time that I'm your friend. Before this you've always done the exact opposite of what I told you. Well, I'll say nothing about that now; but listen to me. If you don't stick close to this shack for the next couple of days, I swear I'll wash my hands of you for good!"

"I promise," murmured Ann.

XXXI

WHEN Ed had gone to the store, Mrs. Cranmer suggested that she and Ann should go to the settlement together to buy supplies. There seemed to be no harm in this; nevertheless, Ann determined to hold to the letter of her promise, and she declined.

Probably Mrs. Cranmer was not displeased. The good woman was clearly burning with curiosity to learn the inwardness of the affair, which Cal had so tantalizingly suppressed. She set off alone.

She returned in an hour or so with an appeased air. She looked at her guest with a new eye—a romantic eye. To her Ann had become the heroine of a thrilling drama. She let it appear that she was quite willing to tell all she had heard, but Ann would not question her, and Mrs. Cranmer was chary about volunteering information.

To Ann it did not seem worth while to question her, because she was very sure that Mrs. Cranmer had not learned the one thing that concerned her. All that Ann cared to know was the true state of Cha-

ko's mind that day.

All day the girl was pursued by the devils of restlessness. She could neither sit still nor put her hand to any work. In and out of the house she went, to and from the edge of the bank, up and down the trail. It was only the baby that kept her from flying off the handle altogether. To hold the baby in her arms gave her strength and sanity.

When night came, and they all went to bed, it was worse. Ann, in her loft, felt as if the low roof was suffocating her. For hours she tossed on her cot, while sleep retreated farther and farther from her eyes.

Finally she rose, and, kneeling at the window, rested her arms on the sill. The sky was crowded with stars; the river was a gray blur, subtle with motion. The night soothed her; she was no longer afraid of it; it began to tempt her curiously. After a while she dressed, and, letting herself softly down the ladder, went outside.

The ugly scars of the clearing did not show under the stars. The fragrance of the pines was a balm to the spirit. With her face up to the stars, Ann went slowly out to the edge of the bank. When she stopped there, and looked down, she was amazed to see a canoe drawn up on the mud below—a light, flat bark canoe. Her heart set up a crazy beating. Around Fort Edward she had seen but one canoe of that sort—Chako's.

Turning, she sought for him wildly and silently in the little clearing. She dared not speak his name, for fear of those in the

house

She came upon him lying face downward, his head wrapped in his arms. She fluttered down beside him like a bird.

"Chako!" she whispered.

"Go away!" he murmured harshly.

She sat beside him with her hands in her

lap, praying for guidance.
"Chako, look at me," she whispered at length.

"I daren't," he groaned. "I'm ashamed!"

Ann's breast was softly irradiated with joy. Her instinct bade her to be silent.

"Go away!" Chako said again. "I don't want you to pity me."

"I don't pity you," she said simply.
"Why didn't you go with Bower?" he said harshly.

"I never thought of such a thing."
"Do you know what happened last

night?"
"Yes."

"Don't you despise me for it?"

" No."

There was a silence. Chako did not turn or raise his head, but Ann presently became aware that his hand was dumbly seeking hers. He found it, and caught it up against his cheek. The simple, contrite act wiped out all Ann's pain, all her resentment. Nothing needed to be said. Her breast hovered over him like a mother bird.

"I've been crazy all day, thinking you'd gone with Bower," he murmured. "They told me he'd gone, and I made sure you were with him. I was afraid to ask. When night came, I couldn't stand it any longer. I paddled up here. You hadn't gone to bed; so I knew you hadn't gone. Then I couldn't go back again. I wanted you so! I wanted you so! And I knew it was too late!"

"It's not too late," whispered Ann.

"I couldn't face you in the daylight," he faltered. "You don't know me. You

don't know what passed through my mind up there."

"Yes, I know that, too."

"I was crazy. I don't know what got into me. The worse I acted, the finer you showed up, and that made me savage and devilish. And all the time I wanted you so! I wanted to be decent. Well, I see the truth now clear enough. You are the only one that could save me from the devil that's in me. You saved me once when you sent the gold into the canon, and robbed yourself doing it. I know now how I need you, but I've lost my chance. Without you I'm a goner!"

Ann slipped down beside him, flung an arm over his shoulders, and rubbed her cheek in his hair.

"You mustn't do that!" Chako said sharply. "It drives me crazy! I don't deserve it!"

"What's deserving got to do with it?" whispered Ann. "I love you—I love the bad in you and the good!"

He sprang up.

"Oh, Ann! Oh, Ann!" he murmured brokenly. "I—I—no, I can't say it, but I'll show you! By God, if I live, I'll show you!"

Ann's head went home at last.

THE END

NATURE, THE HEALER

WHEN all the world has gone awry,
And I myself least favor find
With my own self, and soon to die
And leave the whole sad coil behind
Appears the one and only way;
Should I but hear some water falling
Through woodland veils in happy May,
And small bird unto small bird calling—
Oh, then my heart is glad as they!

Lifted my load of cares, and fled
My ghosts of weakness and despair;
All unafraid I raise my head
And life to do its utmost dare.
Then, if in its accustomed place
One flower I should by chance find blooming,
With lovely resurrected face,
From autumn's rust and winter's snowing—
I laugh to think of my disgrace.

A simple brook, a simple flower,
A simple wood in green array—
What, Nature, thy mysterious power
To bind and heal our mortal clay?
What mystic surgery is thine,
Whose eyes of us seem all unheeding,
That e'en so sad a heart as mine
Laughs at the wounds that late were bleeding?
Yea, sadder hearts, oh, power divine!

I think we are not otherwise
Than all the children of thy knee;
For so each furred and winged one flies,
Wounded, to lay its heart on thee,
And, strangely nearer to thy breast,
Knows and yet knows not of thy healing,
Asking but there awhile to rest,
With wisdom beyond our revealing—
Knows and yet knows not, and is blest!